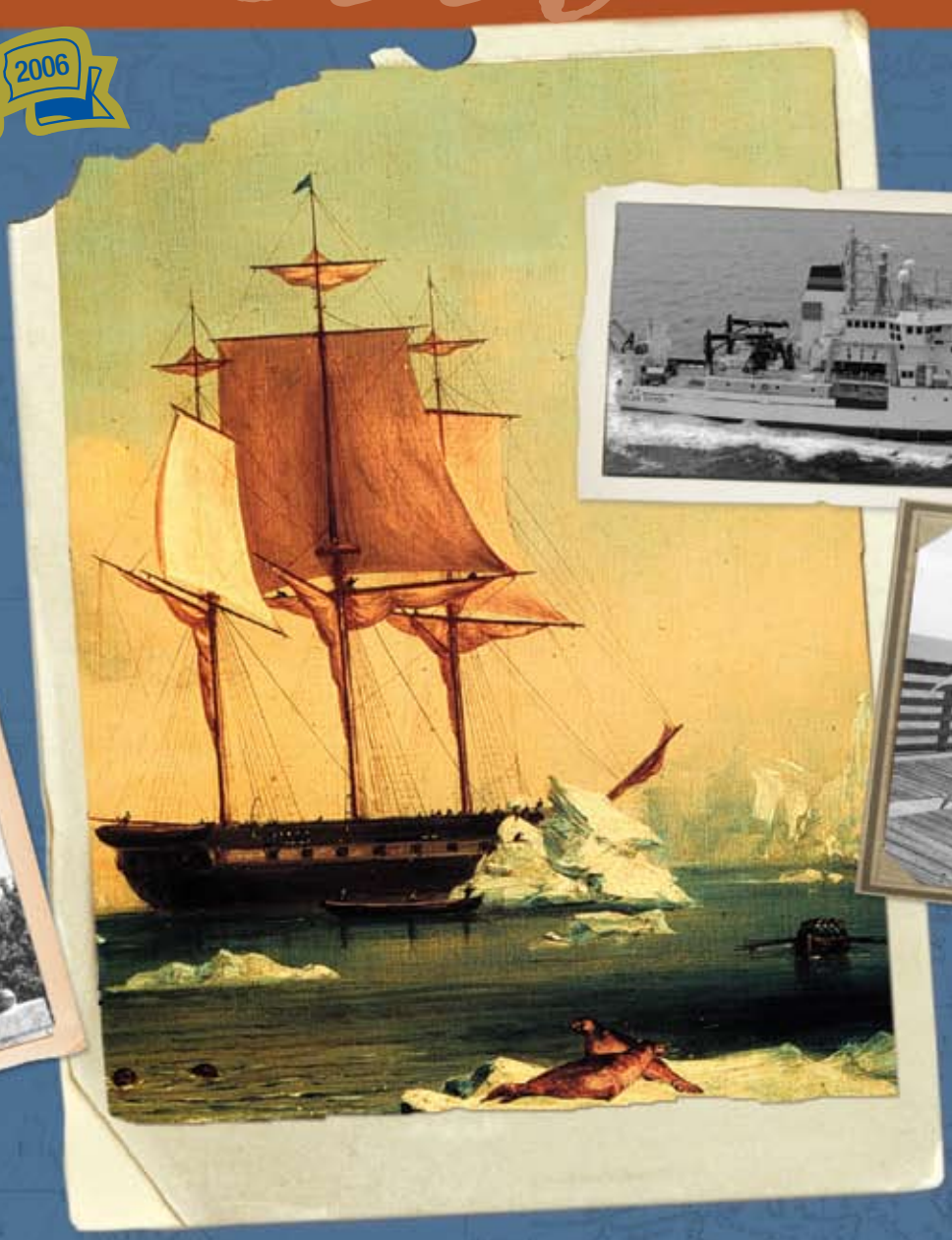
NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE 2005 REPORT



NOAA Fisheries Service

U.S. Department of Commerce | National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration | National Marine Fisheries Service

Vision

The American people enjoy the riches and benefits of healthy and diverse marine ecosystems.

Mission

Stewardship of living marine resources through science-based conservation and management and the promotion of healthy ecosystems.

History

The United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries became the Nation's first Federal conservation agency when it was initiated in 1871. The newly formed Agency was soon referred to as simply the Fish Commission. Its mandate included the protection, study, management, and restoration of fish. Over the last 135 years, the Agency's official name has changed several times—from the Bureau of Fisheries to the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries to the National Marine Fisheries Service. Today, to reflect our contribution to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration we are referred to as NOAA Fisheries Service. However, regardless of name, certain principles have remained constant through the years—our basic vision, mission, and commitment to science, service, and stewardship. We value your interest, questions, and comments. Please feel free to contact us.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
NOAA Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
(301) 713-2239
www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Public Affairs
(301) 713-2370 x144

Publication Production and Project Management:
Bill Zahner
Constituent Services
(301) 713-2379 x 206

An on-line version of this report is available at: *http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov*

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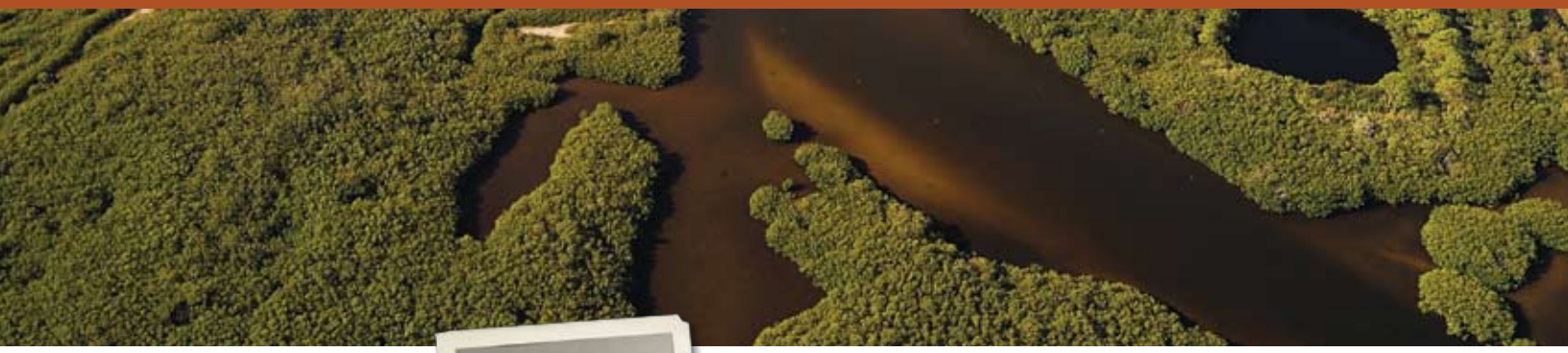


In 2005 Congress and the American people were presented with new measures to strengthen the health and viability of ocean resources. New regulations are already paying dividends in reducing bycatch, protecting deep water corals, and rebuilding fish stocks. I'm pleased with our progress, while keeping an eye on new ways to further improve the stewardship and economic strength of our ocean resources.

Behind every successful organization is the quality of its most valuable resource: its people. This has been a year of success and calamity. I could not be more proud of the women and men of the National Marine Fisheries Service who in many cases had to overcome personal loss and disruption to their lives, yet they still contributed to making 2005 a very successful and productive year.

It is said that greatness is manifested in adversity, and heroines and heroes are only born in calamity. If that's true, we are living in an age of heroes. The adversity and calamity wrought by Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma in the Gulf of Mexico this year proved both the power of natural disaster and the strength of the human spirit. NOAA in short order was able to account for all employees working or living in the storm ravaged Gulf area, including the 132 Fisheries Service employees. Although no employees were injured, many suffered damages to property, and some lost their homes and almost everything they owned. In addition, our Pascagoula Lab was destroyed.

NOAA was one of the first agencies to mobilize resources in response to Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma. NOAA ships, planes, and many experts helped assess the damage caused by the powerful storms responsible for widespread destruction and loss of life. NOAA Office of Response and Restoration personnel assisted the Coast Guard, EPA, and State of Louisiana to identify, assess, and mitigate more than 200 reported releases and unreported hazardous material problems. Fishing in the Gulf region was severely affected, and NOAA worked with the states to assess damage to the 15 major fishing ports and the 177 seafood processing facilities. The NOAA research vessel *NANCY FOSTER* worked off the coasts of Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama to study the effects of Hurricane Katrina on marine resources and the ecosystem. And NOAA led the surveying effort to open the region's ports and shipping channels as soon as possible, and is now researching the best ways to help restore marine habitat lost to the storms.

Many NOAA Fisheries Service colleagues as well as colleagues from NOAA's Ocean Service and Weather Service mobilized to assist the stricken regions in activities ranging from rescuing victims, to cleaning up and moving people back into their homes. In addition, NOAA Fisheries Service employees around the country helped financially through employee-initiated fundraising activities to provide some immediate assistance to co-workers. Employees also responded to the call by the Secretary of Homeland Security for volunteers to assist the Federal Emergency Management Agency during this crisis. Your generosity and support made a difference.

At the beginning of last year's Business Report, I made a promise that 2005 would be a year bringing new approaches in our continued effort to reduce overfishing, rebuild overfished fisheries, and improve stewardship of living marine resources. I'm pleased to report achievements that exceeded last year's optimism. In 2005 Congress and the American people were presented with new measures to strengthen the health and viability of ocean resources. New regulations are already paying dividends in reducing bycatch, protecting deep water corals, and rebuilding fish stocks. I'm pleased with our progress, while keeping an eye on new ways to further improve the stewardship and economic strength of our ocean resources.

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act reauthorization legislation proposes giant steps to end overfishing, enrich our knowledge of fisheries science, and bring saltwater sportfishing data into a new era. The proposal we presented to Congress in 2005 also fulfills a promise I made years ago, to create a NOAA Fisheries Service that adopts a business-like mindset giving fishing industries new flexibility to optimize markets and increase the safety of our men and women working at sea. This is more important now than ever. Thanks for helping me keep that promise.

Seafood consumption in the U.S. continues to climb. Americans eat an average of 16.6 lbs. of seafood annually, a new record. Even as we rebuild fisheries, demand for high-quality seafood will exceed supply. The role of aquaculture in our marine fisheries must grow if we are to meet domestic seafood needs. And we must ensure that any future aquaculture activities go hand in hand with habitat protection and in concert with our wild fisheries management. Toward that end, in 2005 an offshore aquaculture bill was sent to Congress, and I look forward to working with Congress in 2006 on its passage.

On the international front, NOAA continues to be an environmental leader— from GEOSS (Global Earth Observation System of Systems) to environmental stewardship plus many other initiatives. At the 2005 International Whaling Commission meeting the Commission voted to have the 2007 meeting here in the United States (Anchorage, Alaska). At the ICCAT meeting in November, I was elected Commission Chair. 2006 will be a busy year, but we have the dedicated staff to allow us to aggressively tackle our domestic and international portfolio.

I have always said that the ocean means different things to different people. Some fish for food or as a business. Others fish for fun. Americans continue to spend more time fishing recreationally, and effective science and management are important to their future. Still others take heart from our work to protect and restore marine mammals and other sea life. In 2005, the administration proposed reauthorization of the Marine Mammal Protection Act. We continue our efforts to recover protected species and protect and restore habitat critical to all marine life. Our habitat restoration program is a great success.

In closing, some of you are nearing the conclusion to successful careers with NOAA Fisheries Service and are moving on to other endeavors. In 2005 we said goodbye to three of our senior leaders — Rollie Schmitten, Dr. Mike Sissenwine, and Laurie Allen. Others have just joined us and are beginning new careers throughout the far reaches of the Fisheries Service. All of us at NOAA Fisheries Service can look forward to an incredibly rewarding experience of service to the environment, to provide food, jobs, and recreational opportunities that substantially contribute to our Nation's greatness. This annual report highlights some of the many accomplishments of all who participate in the science, management, and stewardship of the Nation's living marine resources and points the way forward for meeting future challenges of rebuilding the Gulf fisheries and fishing infrastructure, addressing ocean energy and acoustics issues, staying the course to end overfishing, and much more.

I thank all of you.

Bill Hogarth

Bill Hogarth

Unprecedented Hurricane Season

Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma brought widespread destruction to the Gulf Coast, from Florida to Texas, with the most damage in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. The damage in some places was so catastrophic that it may well change the face of both recreational and commercial fisheries throughout the northern Gulf of Mexico. Even with their personal losses, NOAA employees were able to continue their missions as well as help their neighbors and colleagues.

NOAA On The Scene

- With the the Pascagoula Lab destroyed, NOAA Ships *GORDON GUNTER* and *OREGON II* provided shelter and communications and functioned as a command center for NOAA recovery efforts almost immediately after the storm.
- Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service Assistant Administrator, provided the Gulf States with additional money, and within days began a series of weekly calls with the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Councils and Commissions to discuss rebuilding.
- Work began right away to study the effects of the storms on the abundance, distribution, and safety of seafood in the northern Gulf.
- Immediately after landfall by these storms, NOAA Fisheries Service began working with affected Gulf States to prepare Declarations of Fisheries Disasters. The declarations authorize the Federal government to assist affected fisheries.

…25 Sept New Orleans, Louisiana (Hurricane Rita)

"Have a large NOAA contingent already in the State moving through here and Texas actively …NOAA equipment en route as well as a NOAA ship to support work…loss of homes across the coast very severe. Flooding and loss of coastal communities top priority to recover…still looking for storm victims trapped by storm surge in Vermilion Parish…"

Tim Osborn - NOAA

"NOAA stands ready to continue developing rebuilding plans for the fisheries and the fishing-dependent communities of the Gulf of Mexico affected by these devastating hurricanes." — Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service

- NOAA Fisheries Service and its partners continue to help rebuild and restore habitat.
- NOAA Fisheries Service granted four consecutive turtle excluder device exemptions to allow the shrimp industry an opportunity to fish in areas that would otherwise be un-fishable.

Excerpts from Assistant Administrator Bill Hogarth's message to staff on August 30:

"Now that Hurricane Katrina has moved well inland, we are now just beginning to understand its impact on NOAA employees and facilities in the Gulf Coast. In particular, for NOAA Fisheries, our employees in the Pascagoula/Bay St. Louis, Mississippi areas, whose work stations are the Pascagoula Lab and Stennis Space Center in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi have been impacted…This all began…when Hurricane Katrina as a Category 1 storm swept across South Florida and moved into the Gulf. Our main facility in Miami (Southeast Science Center/Miami Lab) sustained …damage and we continue to assess the storm's impact there.

Our colleagues in the Gulf Coast area were not so lucky as the hurricane intensified and was a major…storm when it hit the Mississippi coast.…We are in the process of contacting all of our employees and have some reports from a select few that they have sustained substantial personal property loss. We do know that the Pascagoula Laboratory has sustained major damage…It will likely be several more days, if not longer, before we have a true understanding of the hurricane's impact. I know that everyone's thoughts and best wishes are with our colleagues and their families as they go through this disaster..."

NOAA Fisheries Service Pascagoula Lab completely destroyed by hurricane.

Charter boat Captain Bob Zales on August 31:

"I can tell you that there will be no fishing of any kind between Dauphin Island (Alabama) up to Cameron (Louisiana) for many months to come….If people have not gotten the sense of the destruction by now they have no concept of devastation….It will be months and in many cases years before life returns to normal in those areas as the geographic make-up has been changed forever…"

…Hogarth testimony before Senate Commerce Committee – December 15, 2005

"The effects of the Gulf of Mexico storms on fishing fleets and infrastructure were devastating. The majority of vessels sunk or cast ashore were commercial fishing vessels. Losses of shore side facilities were equally devastating. NOAA stands ready to continue developing rebuilding plans for the fisheries and the fishing-dependent communities of the Gulf of Mexico affected by these devastating hurricanes."

Fisheries Management Program

The Fisheries Management Program works to maintain sustainable commercial, recreational, and subsistence fisheries; eliminate overfishing and rebuild overfished stocks; and increase long-term economic and social benefits to the Nation from living marine resources. The following activities are within the Sustainable Fisheries Program: Regional Fishery Management Councils, Atlantic Highly Migratory Species, Domestic Fisheries, Regulatory Services, and State-Federal Fisheries. The principal authority for managing our Nation's fisheries comes from the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act.

NOAA Fisheries Service funded more than $2.0 million in bycatch reduction technology and technology transfer projects in 2005.

Reducing Bycatch

NOAA Fisheries Service made substantial progress in implementing its national bycatch strategy in 2005, including the implementation of regulations to minimize bycatch in the following areas: the Pacific Coast groundfish fishery; Atlantic herring fishery; Northeast multispecies fisheries; pelagic fisheries of the Western Pacific region; and the South Atlantic shrimp fishery. NOAA Fisheries Service funded more than $2.0 million in bycatch reduction technology and technology transfer projects in 2005.

An additional $2.5 million went to maintain or increase observer coverage in fisheries where bycatch is a concern. NOAA Fisheries Service led international efforts to minimize bycatch, including a shark finning ban adopted by the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization. Also, NOAA Fisheries Service participated in fisheries bilateral meetings with Canada and Mexico, where sea turtle longline issues were discussed, and the inaugural meeting of the new Western and Central Pacific Fishery Commission, where sea turtle bycatch resolutions were proposed.

Dedicated Access Programs

The President's Ocean Action Plan calls for increased use of market-based management systems, or dedicated access programs. These programs can improve the economic performance of the fisheries, contribute to ending overfishing, improve safety, and provide

Top Commercial Ports and Species

Top US Ports	($)	Top US Ports (Volume/Pounds)		Top Commercial Species	($)	Top Commercial Species (Volume/Pounds)	
New Bedford, MA	$207 Million	Dutch Harbor-Unalaska, AK	886 Million Lbs.	Crabs	$448 Million	Pollock	3.4 Billion Lbs.
Dutch Harbor-Unalaska, AK	$155 Million	Reedville, VA	401 Million Lbs.	Shrimp	$426 Million	Menhaden	1.5 Billion Lbs.
Hampton Roads Area, VA	$101 Million	Empire-Venice, LA	379 Million Lbs.	Lobsters	$344 Million	Salmon	738 Thousand Lbs.
Kodiak, AK	$91 Million	Kodiak, AK	313 Million Lbs.	Scallops	$322 Million	Cod	603 Thousand Lbs.
Cape May-Wildwood, NJ	$68 Million	Intracoastal City, LA	302 Million Lbs.	Flatfish	$301 Million	Hakes	503 Thousand Lbs.

fishermen with more opportunity to make sound business decisions about when to fish. In 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service implemented a dedicated access program for King and Tanner fisheries in the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands. These fisheries had long experienced overcapitalization and short seasons, and the new management program will improve the economic health of the fishery and promote sustainable harvest strategies for the crab stocks. In addition, NOAA Fisheries Service continued working with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council on an individual fishing quota program for the red snapper fishery and with the Pacific Council on a dedicated access program for the trawl groundfish fishery.

Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery

The Atlantic sea scallop fishery continues to thrive under the current management program. The Atlantic Sea Scallop Fishery Management Plan incorporates an area rotational management program that protects small scallops and concentrates fishing effort in areas where there are high concentrations of larger scallops. In the 2004 fishing year, the fishery landed approximately 63 million pounds of scallops worth approximately $307 million. Preliminary statistics indicate that landings in the 2005 fishing year (through October 2005) are approaching 45 million pounds, worth an astonishing $313 million. Effective management of the scallop fishery and healthy overall stock status, combined with high prices for scallops, has resulted in this economic success. The price for scallops is nearly double recent average prices as a result of higher landings of larger, more valuable scallops, and higher global demand for U.S. sea scallop product.

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gutierrez Statement on the National Offshore Aquaculture Act— February 13, 2006

"I am convinced that the United States must explore the potential of offshore aquaculture to help meet the growing demand for seafood in this country and to create jobs and economic opportunity for coastal communities. To support that, we are making the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005 a priority for this department and this country. We need to create this opportunity now."

Aquaculture Program

2005 was a banner year for the agency's revitalized aquaculture program as it took the lead in delivering the National Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005 to Congress, and in focusing a new national dialog on the role of domestic aquaculture as the United States struggles to meet the growing demand for seafood. With the typical American consuming 16.6 pounds of seafood a year, and the indisputable health benefits of seafood as part of a balanced diet, the demand for seafood will likely continue to grow. However, in 2005, the country's annual seafood trade deficit closed in on $8 billion, which was a powerful driver for the program as it worked to build a more dynamic domestic industry that will meet the growing demand for seafood and offer a homegrown alternative to imports.

Introduced into the Senate in June, the offshore aquaculture bill would give the Secretary of Commerce new authority to issue permits for aquaculture operations in Federal waters, while providing environmental and other safeguards to protect wild stocks, marine ecosystems, and other users. The bill is a first for NOAA in terms of support for an expansion of domestic aquaculture production. The bill also reflects the momentum for aquaculture generated in 2004 by the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy recommendations and on the commitments in the U.S. Ocean Action Plan.

Domestically, the program continued its work with the states to develop an environmentally sustainable, economically viable aquaculture industry designed to meet their needs while protecting the environment, providing nutritious food products, and helping revitalize coastal communities. NOAA also provided expert participation in the ongoing effort to develop and implement an aquatic animal health management program for the United States, as part of a Federal interagency team commissioned under the Joint Subcommittee on Aquaculture. NOAA also sponsored a groundbreaking international conference in Hawaii focused on the role of aquaculture in ecosystem-based management. The results of this meeting will be published in 2006.

NOAA's acknowledgement as a leader in the field of shellfish aquaculture nationally and internationally continued in 2005, highlighted by the 25th annual Milford Aquaculture Seminar. Staff from the Milford Lab also participated in a historic workshop with France that focused on the genome of the Pacific oyster. The results of this international research work will have applications to breeding and stock-identification of this commercially important shellfish both here and abroad.

On the finfish side of the marine stock enhancement equation, NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center continued to develop conservation aquaculture technology using captive brood stock to reduce the extreme risk of extinction for stocks such as Redfish Lake sockeye salmon. The center's ground breaking culture work with Pacific rockfish was another highlight in 2005.

2005 NOAA Fisheries–State Marine Fisheries Directors' Biennial Meeting

In April 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service's Bill Hogarth hosted the agency's biennial State Marine Fisheries Directors' meeting with assistance provided by the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission. Representatives from coastal States met with NOAA Fisheries Headquarters and Regional leadership in St. Pete Beach, Florida.

For nearly twenty-five years, the State Marine Fisheries Director's Meetings have provided a forum for State and Federal managers to share thoughts and ideas on how to improve working relationships through better communication and cooperation while trying to solve the many problems associated with protecting, restoring, and managing coastal ocean resources. At the 2005 meeting, NOAA Fisheries Service agreed to work with the States and Interstate Commissions to better coordinate data collection, monitoring, research and management efforts; to address confidentiality standards for shared data; and to host a National Fisheries Data Workshop. Some of this year's agenda topics included: marine aquaculture, marine protected areas, implementation of the Ocean Action Plan, improved data acquisition methods, the ecosystem approach to management, joint enforcement agreements, and protected resource issues.

American Lobster Management: A State-Federal Dedicated Access Milestone

In 2005, the Northeast Region completed the implementation of a State/Federal partnership to control interjurisdictional fishing efforts, based on historical participation in the American lobster trap fishery, in the offshore Exclusive Economic Zone and coastal lobster management areas south of Long Island Sound to North Carolina. This resource management milestone is part of a collaborative management approach between the Atlantic Coastal States and NOAA Fisheries Service to end overfishing and rebuild American lobster stocks through a State/Federal fishery plan overseen by the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission. This dedicated access program reduced latent fishing effort by about 80 percent in lobster fishing areas that comprise about 70 percent of the lobster fishing range. The program is a landmark achievement under the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Cooperative Management Act.

Managing Our Nation's Fisheries Conference

The Managing Our Nation's Fisheries Conference was held in Washington, DC. It was sponsored by the eight Regional Fishery Management Councils, the three interstate Marine Fisheries Commissions, and NOAA Fisheries Service. Participants and attendees included members of the commercial and recreational fishing industries, managers, scientists, environmental organizations, and others. Major topics discussed included: ecosystem approach to management, strengthening scientific advice, and implementation of individual fishing quota programs. More than 600 people attended.

Annual Status of U.S. Fisheries Report

The 2005 report shows progress for some stocks, but also signaled to fishery managers that there is still work to be done. One stock, lingcod, is fully rebuilt — three years ahead of projections. Six rebuilding stocks have increased and are no longer overfished, however, rebuilding measures will continue. Three previously assessed stocks were determined to be overfished. Three stocks are no longer subject to overfishing and four stocks are subject to overfishing. Overall, NOAA Fisheries Service reviewed 530 individual stocks and stock complexes and made determinations of both overfishing and overfished status for a 194 stocks and complexes; an additional 57 have either an overfishing or overfished determination. Of those 251 determinations, 239 have known overfishing determinations: 191, or 79.9 percent, are not subject to overfishing and 48, or 20.1 percent, are subject to overfishing. Two-hundred and six stocks have known overfished determinations: 152, or 73.8 percent, are not overfished and 54, or 26.2 percent, are overfished. NOAA Fisheries Service Assistant Administrator Bill Hogarth immediately took action to address issues raised in the report. Some Councils already have begun to take corrective action.

Gulf of Mexico Snapper

In 2005, the NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Region, working with the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council, implemented regulations to rebuild Gulf of Mexico red and vermilion snapper populations. In the case of red snapper, managers also instituted a mandatory observer program for commercial and for-hire vessels. The vermilion snapper

"In 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service celebrates 135 years of managing our nation's fisheries. While science, management, policy, and outreach and education each play an important role in our successes, it is collaboration with our partners that keeps us moving forward."
— Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator, NOAA Fisheries Service

regulations increased the minimum size limit for both commercial and recreational sectors, and closed the commercial fishery from April 22 through May 31.

Gulf of Mexico Red Grouper

The Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council and NOAA Fisheries Service acted to reduce overfishing of Gulf of Mexico groupers and get the species back on track with its 10-year rebuilding program. The regulations reduced the recreational catch limit, and closed the recreational grouper fishery in November and December 2005. The Gulf of Mexico grouper population is under a strict rebuilding plan, and the total recreational and commercial fishing needed to be reduced by 9.4 percent.

New England Shellfish Closures/Red Tide

During the early summer, New England State waters from Maine to Massachusetts were affected by a massive red tide affecting shellfish. The Food and Drug Administration requested action by NOAA Fisheries Service to close fishing areas given the severity of illnesses caused by paralytic shellfish poisoning of persons consuming affected shellfish. At the request of the State's Governors, the U.S. Commerce Secretary declared a commercial fishing failure under Section 312(a) of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act. Funds for disaster relief must be appropriated by Congress, and there is a requirement that States provide some matching funds.

Recreational Fisheries - 2005

Seventeen million Americans spend about $22 billion annually to go sportfishing along our coasts and oceans, making saltwater fishing a more popular sport than baseball or tennis. In 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service worked to strengthen its relationship with the recreational fishing community. In early February, NOAA Fisheries Service cemented its promise for improved customer service with the release of the NOAA Recreational Fisheries Strategic Plan. Developed cooperatively by NOAA staff, State partners, and the angling community, the plan outlines a common framework for improving conservation, science, and outreach. The plan's goals are intended to meet present and future needs of a diverse sport, and be attainable when everyone works together.

The development of regional action teams is the first step in the direction of working together to improve all aspects of sportfishing. These cross-cutting teams made up of Federal, State, and sportfishing partners help generate ideas and then find ways to implement them. Two new action teams met during the summer and fall of 2005— culminating with a "to-do" list that will carry the team's work well into 2006.

The remainder of the year was dedicated to fulfilling the plan's goals of working with the community at fishing tournaments, club meetings, trade shows, and other events popular with anglers.

North Pacific Crab Rationalization Program

The North Pacific Crab Rationalization Program is a new program that allocates Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands king and Tanner crab fisheries resources not only to fishermen, but also to processors and communities. The program encourages crab harvesting cooperatives that can fish on individual fishing quota collectively and cooperatively. The value of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands crab is expected to increase under the program.

Habitat Conservation Program

The Habitat Conservation Program works to protect, conserve, and restore marine and estuarine habitat for NOAA trust resources. The Program—along with its State, Federal, industry, environmental, and academic partners—studies, monitors, and restores habitat such as wetlands, corals, oyster reefs, submerged aquatic vegetation, and anadromous fish habitat, so that living marine resources have sufficient, healthy habitat in which to thrive. The following activities are within the Habitat Conservation Program: habitat protection, habitat restoration, ecosystem assessment, invasive species, permit review, and Chesapeake Bay activities.

NOAA, in collaboration with State and territory partners, is leading the first comprehensive inventory and assessment of all US coral reef protected areas.

Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG)

Prompted by our Nation's need for dependable energy sources, NOAA signed an interagency agreement to provide expedited reviews of environmental issues associated with liquefied natural gas facilities. In late 2004, the Office of Habitat Conservation began working with regions and centers, the NOAA Ocean Service, and the General Counsel to satisfy our requirement to provide technical reviews on license applications for new facilities. To ensure consistency and timeliness, NOAA developed best practices and monitoring guidelines that will assist industry as it develops license applications and implements approved projects. NOAA reviewed several dozen projects in the Gulf of Mexico, northeast, and southwest, working diligently with the US Coast Guard on offshore projects and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on coastal projects, always with a goal of reducing impacts on living marine resources.

Deep-sea Communities

NOAA Fisheries Service responded to a petition for emergency rulemaking to protect deep-sea coral and sponge communities with a commitment to develop a strategy for that purpose. In 2005, great strides were taken including approved closures of deep-sea coral habitats off Alaska, New England, and the Pacific West Coast to bottom trawling and/or all bottom-tending gear. NOAA achieved these closures in cooperation with Regional Fishery Management Councils. In addition, NOAA established the largest marine protected area in US waters (Aleutian Islands Habitat Conservation Area), which prohibits bottom trawling in an area exceeding 274,000 miles. NOAA began developing the first peer-reviewed *Report on the State of the Deep Coral Communities of the United States*. The report will summarize what is known about these communities and offer recommendations for research and conservation priorities based on observed regional trends.

Tropical Corals Conservation

NOAA and US Coral Reef Task Force partners are improving reef conservation activities at all levels of government, according to the 2005 report, *Implementation of the National Coral Reef Action Strategy: Report on US Coral Reef Agency Activities from 2002 to 2003*. The Task Force is well on its way to producing comprehensive digital maps of all shallow coral reef ecosystems by 2009, nearly doubling the number of mapped and characterized ecosystems within the past three years. NOAA, in collaboration with State and territory partners, is leading the first comprehensive inventory and assessment of all US coral reef protected areas. Since 2002, five of the seven US States and territories with coral reefs instituted new or revised fishery regulations to help restore and sustain coral reef fisheries. Fourteen new reef protected areas were

established in Federal waters and related jurisdictions, including the US Virgin Islands, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Florida, and American Samoa. In addition, regional staff in Oahu, Hawaii responded to the February grounding of the *M/V Cape Flattery* by leading one of the largest coral transplantation recovery actions ever attempted in the Pacific— more than 800 colonies.

Community-based Habitat Restoration

In 2005, the Office of Habitat Conservation provided technical and financial assistance, directly and through national and regional partnerships, that supported locally led projects to restore 8,244 acres of estuarine and riparian habitat and open 182 stream miles for diadromous fish to access spawning and rearing areas. In addition to ecological benefits, the 239 restoration projects provided hands-on restoration opportunities for 22,772 volunteers who contributed 194,306 hours of service.

Open Rivers Initiative (ORI)

At the 2005 White House Conference on Cooperative Conservation, NOAA Administrator, Vice Admiral Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr., announced this new initiative which will provide funding and NOAA Fisheries Service technical expertise to remove small dams and other barriers to improve riverine health and promote fish passage. Projects are expected to provide an economic boost for communities, enhance public safety, and improve several fish populations including striped bass, Atlantic and shortnose sturgeon, Atlantic and Pacific salmon, American eel, American shad, blueback herring, and alewife. The first solicitation for project proposals was released in November 2005.

Fisheries Ecosystem Planning in Chesapeake Bay

At its annual meeting, the Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council formally adopted an ecosystem-based approach to living resource management (fisheries). It also adopted the first-of-its-kind document, *Fisheries Ecosystem Planning in Chesapeake Bay* (FEP), as guidance for transforming bay and coastal fisheries management from a single-species approach to an ecosystem-based, multi-species approach. With leadership and coordination from the NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, the FEP was developed by a panel of regional scientists and fisheries managers to broaden current management activities. In the FEP Adoption Statement, the Executive Council gave priority to creating ecosystem-based fishery management plans for oysters, striped bass, blue crabs, Atlantic menhaden, and alosine species such as American shad.

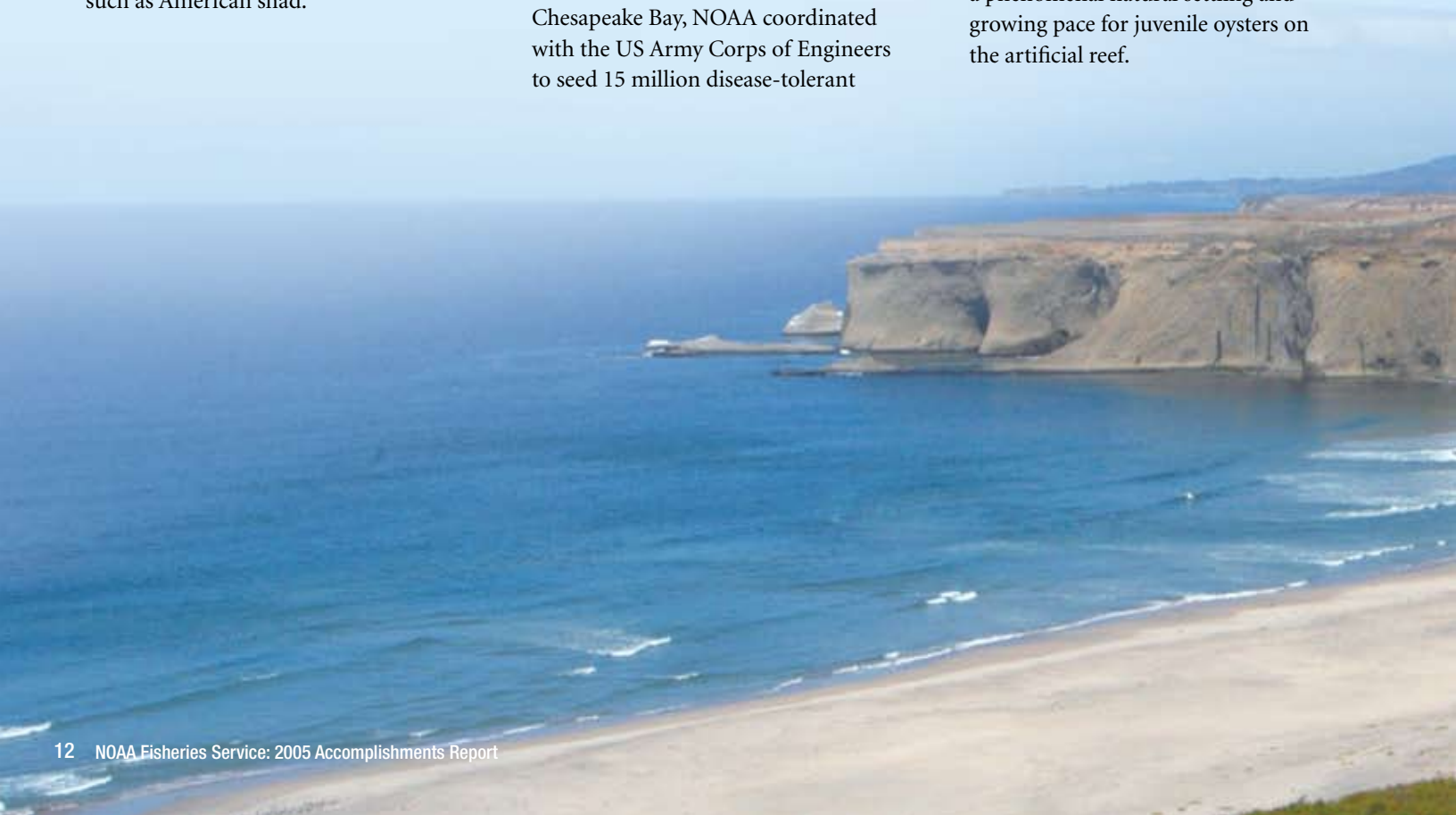
Surviving Hurricane Season 2005

NOAA completed Phase 2 construction of the Delta Wide Crevasse Project in the lower Mississippi River Delta. Construction included the dredging of nine crevasses. These engineered breaches in the river bank allow river water, sediment, and nutrients to reenter wetlands and rebuild marsh habitat. At a construction cost of $2 million, the project will restore up to 2,000 acres over its 20-year life. This project and seven others along the Louisiana shoreline successfully survived the 2005 hurricane season, functioning exactly as designed, protecting the shoreline from erosion.

East and Gulf Coast Oyster Restoration

In the Hudson-Raritan estuary, NOAA successfully guided community-based oyster restoration activities that led to the reappearance of oysters in areas that had been barren for decades. In the Chesapeake Bay, NOAA coordinated with the US Army Corps of Engineers to seed 15 million disease-tolerant broodstock native oysters in the Great Wicomico River (Virginia). To support these large-scale seeding projects, NOAA and the University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science worked to successfully increase oyster production. NOAA also saw success with oysters in the Gulf of Mexico. As part of a settlement for pollution injuries in Lavaca Bay (Texas), limestone rock was placed in the Bay as a foundation for a new oyster reef. Preliminary surveys indicate that ideal growing conditions resulted in a phenomenal natural settling and growing pace for juvenile oysters on the artificial reef.

In the Hudson-Raritan estuary, NOAA successfully guided community-based oyster restoration activities that led to the reappearance of oysters in areas that had been barren for decades.



"The 2005 hurricane season opened the eyes of many to the need for and importance of healthy coastal habitat. Our best hope for effectively protecting, conserving, and restoring fish habitat is through continued collaboration with partners across the Nation and beyond." — Pat Montanio, Director, Habitat Conservation

Damage Assessment Remediation and Restoration Program (DARRP)

The Damage Assessment and Restoration Program added Remediation as part of the program, and a new partner in restoration work, National Ocean Service's Coastal Protection and Restoration Division. The newly minted double "R" DARRP saw the completion of habitat restoration activities in Southern Maryland this fall. In response to natural resource injuries from an April 2000 oil spill, NOAA and co-Trustees completed restoration projects in the Patuxent River, a major Chesapeake Bay tributary. Restoration included a six-acre inter-tidal wetland creation project and a shoreline enhancement project to provide nearly one acre of diamondback terrapin nesting habitat as well as shoreline erosion protection.

Energy Policy Act

As required by the hydropower provisions of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and the Interior jointly established procedures for a new form of expedited, trial-type hearings. The hearings will resolve disputed issues regarding conditions or prescriptions that one or more Departments develop as part of a hydropower license issued by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission. New procedures were also established for considering alternative conditions and prescriptions submitted by any party to a license proceeding. Three substantively identical rules were promulgated on November 17, 2005, one for each agency, with a common preamble.

White House Council on Cooperative Conservation

The White House Council on Cooperative Conservation provided a forum to explore approaches for promoting cooperative conservation with local participation. NOAA Fisheries Service led the development of sessions on science, partnership, and species of concern; identified coastal conservation case studies for the compendium; and worked with constituents to present inspiring coastal success stories. As a result, participants agreed to implement ideas generated at the conference.

Protected Resources

NOAA Fisheries Service is responsible for protecting and recovering marine and anadromous species under the Endangered Species Act and the Marine Mammal Protection Act. The Protected Resources Program directly supports the achievement of NOAA's strategic goal to "protect, restore, and manage the use of coastal and ocean resources through an ecosystem approach to management." A desired outcome of the Protected Resources Program is to increase the number of protected species designated as threatened, endangered, or depleted that have stable or increasing population levels. The Protected Resources Program protects and recovers species through planning, regulation, partnerships, direct action, outreach, and education both domestically and internationally.

During 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service worked in collaboration with the National Marine Sanctuary Program on an unprecedented research cruise to assess marine mammals, seabirds, and the pelagic ecosystem along the West Coast of the United States.

New Hatchery Policy and Recovery Plans for Salmon and Steelhead

In 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service announced a new policy for considering hatchery fish in making listing decisions under the Endangered Species Act. The new policy emphasizes the importance of natural spawning to species' health and clarifies the contributions that hatcheries can make to fish populations. NOAA Fisheries Service is also beginning the preparation of recovery plans for threatened and endangered Pacific salmon and steelhead. These plans will address multiple species in an ecosystem context by focusing on geographic recovery areas or "domains." On the Atlantic coast, NOAA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced the availability of a final recovery plan for Gulf of Maine salmon. This plan identifies the major threats to naturally reproducing Atlantic salmon populations in Maine and specifies recovery actions such as the restoration of freshwater and estuarine habitat.

Puget Sound Killer Whales Protected as Endangered Species

After seeking input from the public and considering the best scientific information, NOAA Fisheries Service decided that the population of Puget Sound killer whales (also known as the Southern Resident killer whales) deserves protection as "endangered" under the Federal Endangered Species Act. This group of killer whales visits Washington State's Puget Sound every summer and is beloved by the local public. Many whales in this population were captured for aquariums during the 1970's; the population continued to decline by almost 20 percent from 1996-2001. The current population of Puget Sound killer whales is approximately 90 animals. These whales remain at risk from vessel traffic, toxic chemicals, and limited food availability, especially salmon. With help from a broad range of stakeholders, NOAA Fisheries Service has proposed a conservation plan for this population, as required by the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

Proposed Conservation Plan for Cook Inlet Beluga Whales

The Cook Inlet beluga whale is one of south central Alaska's most valuable resources, in terms of Native subsistence, culture, and tourism. This stock may once have numbered 1,300 animals, but it has declined dramatically during the last decade. Results of aerial surveys indicated a decline of 47 percent from 1994-98. In response, NOAA Fisheries Service designated the stock as depleted under the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 2000, and a draft Conservation Plan was published in 2005. This plan reviews and assesses the factors influencing the Cook Inlet beluga whale. Factors affecting the

stock's recovery include stranding events, predation, disease, environmental change, subsistence harvest, interactions with fishing vessels, whale watching, coastal development, noise, and pollution. The conservation strategy reflects the best available science, along with the traditional wisdom and knowledge of Alaska natives. The final plan will indicate knowledge gaps, identify necessary research, and provide guidance for management. Models indicate that recovery to a level of 780 whales will require at least 30 years even under optimal conditions.

Additional Steps Taken to Protect Northern Right Whales

NOAA Fisheries Service continues to take action to protect the highly endangered right whale from being struck by passing ships or entangled in fishing gear. A *Right Whale Sighting Advisory System* on the NOAA website now provides real-time sighting information from aerial and shipboard surveys to the commercial shipping industry and other marine traffic. The coordinates of right whale sightings are also broadcast for 24 hours by the Coast Guard, NOAA Weather Radio, and other media. Many cooperating organizations and agencies are involved in supporting these operations. The first year-round offshore survey of northern right whales was conducted in 2005, with the results posted online in near real-time. NOAA scientists have also deployed passive-acoustic buoys near Cape Cod that automatically record the presence of right whales and relay information by cell or satellite phone back to the laboratory. In addition, NOAA Fisheries Service has proposed new gear modifications to address the problem of large whales becoming entangled in fisheries using traps, pots, and gillnets.

As evidenced by this damaged dorsal fin, vessel strikes to marine mammals are a concern.This kind of damage puts the animal's life at risk from the trauma or from subsequent disease.

West Coast Ecosystem Survey Focuses on Marine Mammals and Seabirds

During 2005, NOAA Fisheries Service worked in collaboration with the National Marine Sanctuary Program on an unprecedented research cruise to assess marine mammals, seabirds, and the pelagic ecosystem along the West Coast of the United States. The project, known as CSCAPE (Collaborative Survey of Cetaceans and the Pelagic Ecosystem), included comprehensive surveys extending 300 nautical miles offshore, as well as fine-scale coverage in four of the five National Marine Sanctuaries on the West Coast. By combining ship time, funding, expertise, and personnel, the project maximized the value of the survey and provided valuable opportunities for training, research coordination, and data standardization. The project is expected to result in more precise abundance estimates for marine mammal stock assessments. A secondary objective is to characterize the pelagic ecosystem within the study area through the collection of biological and oceanographic data, seabird studies, and acoustic sampling. Participants in NOAA's *Teachers at Sea* program joined the cruise and posted weekly reports online.

Threatened Listing Proposed for Staghorn and Elkhorn Corals

NOAA Fisheries Service has proposed to provide new protection for staghorn coral and elkhorn coral by classifying them as threatened under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). These corals live in shallow water on reefs in the Bahamas, Florida, and the Caribbean. Both species suffered precipitous declines in the early 1980's throughout their ranges. Threats to these species include physical damage from human activities and hurricanes, as well as disease and temperature-induced bleaching. NOAA's Coral Program monitors disease outbreaks and funds research on restoration techniques. But in spite of recent conservation efforts, staghorn and elkhorn corals have continued to decline in abundance. If the listing decision is approved through a final determination, these two species would be the first corals ever listed under the ESA. Staghorn and elkhorn corals exhibit particular branching patterns that provide important habitat for other reef organisms; no other Caribbean reef-building coral species are able to fulfill these ecosystem functions.

Protected Resources

"The protection of endangered resources requires conservation measures and policy, innovative techniques, and some tough choices. Fortunately, NOAA Fisheries Service collaborates with many partners to better understand the impact of choosing a particular direction." — Jim Lecky, Director, Protected Resources

During 2005, the Marine Turtle Research Group conducted aerial surveys to determine loggerhead abundance and distribution along the Pacific coast of Baja California.

Proposed Change in Scallop Gear Would Protect Sea Turtles

NOAA Fisheries Service has proposed a new requirement for Atlantic sea scallop gear that would prevent loggerhead sea turtles from being captured. Turtles that enter the scallop dredges can be injured or killed by physical trauma or drowning when the dredge is hauled back and emptied. The proposed gear modification would require a "mat" across the dredge opening, made from chains that are spaced widely enough to allow sea scallops to be harvested, but closely enough to prevent turtles from entering. The mats would be required on all sea scallop dredges used by Federal permit holders fishing in the Mid-Atlantic from May 1 through November 30, the time of year when sea turtles are most likely to be in the area. According to current estimates, up to 749 loggerhead turtles are taken in the Mid-Atlantic scallop fishery annually, of which 64 percent are likely to be seriously injured or killed. In field experiments conducted during 2003 and 2004, no turtle interactions occurred with the modified gear.

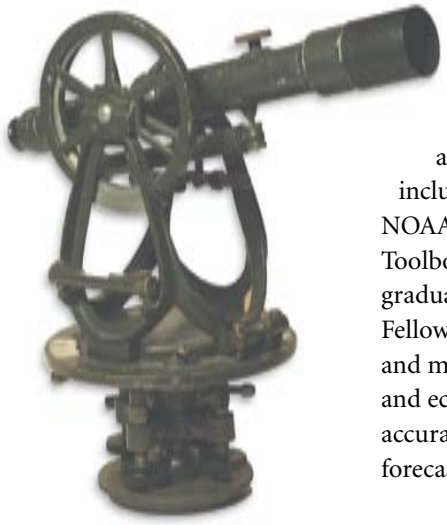
Scientists Collaborate to Track Loggerhead Turtles Using Latest Technology

Scientists from NOAA Fisheries Service are using sophisticated technology to learn more about threatened loggerhead turtles. During 2005, the Marine Turtle Research Group conducted aerial surveys to determine loggerhead abundance and distribution along the Pacific coast of Baja California, an area thought to be critical habitat for juvenile turtles. This project was a joint effort with Mexico's Secretariat of Environment and Natural Resources, and local conservation organizations. In another collaborative project, scientists from NOAA Fisheries Service joined colleagues from Japan on the vessel *AICHI MARU* in an area near the International Date Line, which has also been identified as important loggerhead habitat. The scientists successfully attached small satellite-linked tags to forty 2-year-old turtles. These tags will provide new data on the juvenile turtles' behavior, such as how deep they swim and how far they travel over time.

Science and Technology

The Science and Technology Program covers the full spectrum of NOAA Fisheries Service's scientific research, monitoring, and forecasting contributions for all of NOAA's mission goals. The Program administers NOAA Fisheries Service's "end-to-end" coastal and oceanic ecological observing system. Components of this system include: fisheries and protected resources surveys, ecosystem surveys, economic and socio-cultural surveys, recreational and commercial statistics, fisheries observer coverage, and cooperative research. The Program is responsible for science quality assurance and collaborating with other Federal and State agencies, stakeholders, and the public.

Within days of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, NOAA Fisheries Service began working with Gulf State resources directors and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) to help the area recover.



Expand Fish Stock Assessments

Following publication of the Marine Fish Stock Assessment Improvement Plan in 2000 and five years of increased funding under the Expand Annual Stock Assessment budget line, NOAA Fisheries Service was able to assess an unprecedented 105 of the 230 major fish stocks in 2005. This includes four stocks that had previously not been assessed and raised the percentage with adequate assessment (Tier 2 within past five years) to 57 percent. Large numbers of assessments came from New England and the West Coast to ensure accurate and timely information on the status of groundfish stocks, including several on rebuilding plans. The advancement was fueled by improvements across the spectrum of fishery and survey data collection and analysis. Notable innovations included the use of new models in the NOAA Fisheries Service Assessment Toolbox, some by recently hired graduates of the NOAA - Sea Grant Fellowship in Population Dynamics, and more inclusion of environmental and ecosystem information to improve accuracy of the assessments and forecasts.

Deep-Sea Corals Symposium

NOAA sponsored and co-organized the 3rd International Symposium on Deep-Sea Corals (Nov. 28 – Dec. 2, 2005), held at the University of Miami's Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Science (RSMAS) on Virginia Key, Florida. The symposium brought together more than 240 science and policy leaders from 29 countries, making this a major international scientific gathering. Marine geologists believe that due to their worldwide distribution and longevity of hundreds of years, coldwater corals may be an excellent indicator of past climate and oceanic current conditions. Coldwater corals may also provide similar important ecological benefits (e.g., substrate for attachment, refuge from predators, feeding and spawning sites) as their tropical counterparts. Because of these benefits and apparent associations with fish communities have begun to take action to preserve coldwater coral habitat. NOAA Fisheries Service will continue to work with other NOAA line offices, Federal agencies, and the international community to map, monitor, and seek to understand coldwater coral and sponge habitats so that responsible conservation and management actions can be implemented.

Initiating an Integrated Database System for the West Coast

In 2005, on the recommendations of the Integrated Ocean Observing System (IOOS) Data Management and Communication (DMAC) Committee, NOAA Fisheries Service established a distributed data system, called PaCOOS, to define data requirements and standards for an integrated ocean observing system on the West Coast. A standardized and integrated data system provides easier

access to data for scientists, managers, and other users; creates opportunities to merge different observing system data and develop new syntheses and products; and provides interoperability between data sets that can work within a larger national data system—a system that is currently under development. The Southwest and Northwest Fisheries Science Centers conducted two pilot projects that demonstrated how disparate data of varying formats and from a variety of West Coast sources can be incorporated into a single distributed data system—clearly showing how integration and interoperability of data sets can be accomplished.

The benefits of integrating regional and national data management systems that combine ecosystem data, such as currents and bathymetry, with fisheries and protected resources data is important to NOAA Fisheries Service Ecosystem Approach to Management.

Gulf of Mexico Hurricane Impacts

Within days of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, NOAA Fisheries Service began working with Gulf State resources directors and the Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission (GSMFC) to help the area recover. Part of that strategy was assessing whether potentially harmful pollutants and contamination from oil spills and other material were a threat to seafood harvests; assessing impacts on resource abundance; determining social and economic impacts on industries dependent upon commercial, recreational, and for-hire fisheries and related shore-side infrastructure; and mapping the extent of habitat loss from storm surge and wave action. Here is some of what NOAA Fisheries Service accomplished:

Effects on Seafood Safety:
NOAA research vessels and chartered commercial fishing vessels obtained representative seafood samples to test for evidence of hydrocarbons, persistent organic pollutants, and bacterial contamination. Seafood samples indicated no toxic contamination above FDA guidelines. Enhanced monitoring activities for seafood safety continues because of the potential for delayed uptake of pollutants in the food chain.

Effects on Resource Abundance:
Assessments of resource abundance offered both good news and bad news. Preliminary results from a stock assessment survey cruise initiated in October 2005 using NOAA research vessels indicate that shrimp and bottom fish abundance was the same or slightly higher than in the fall of 2004, with shrimp and other valuable species relatively abundant and widely distributed. In contrast, Mississippi indicates that their oyster reefs have been largely devastated, with no possibility of rebounding for at least two years.

Economic Impacts on Fisheries:
Because of the extent of damage in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi, the States indicated their most immediate need was to estimate the

extent of infrastructure and vessel damage and impacts on coastal communities with valuable fishing industries. NOAA Fisheries Service took the lead on assessing economic impacts on fisheries and arranged for community assessments through short-term contracts with local experts.

Commercial Fisheries Impacts: In 2004, the first sale value of commercial harvest in the areas impacted by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita was $595 million. NOAA Fisheries Service estimated the impacts of the hurricanes on fishing activity by comparing fishery landings in September 2005 with September catches from the same States in 2003 and 2004. Due to the effects of the hurricanes, shrimp and oyster landings declined 97 percent and 94 percent respectively in September as compared with September 2003-2004 landings which were valued at $64 million. Louisiana catches dropped off entirely

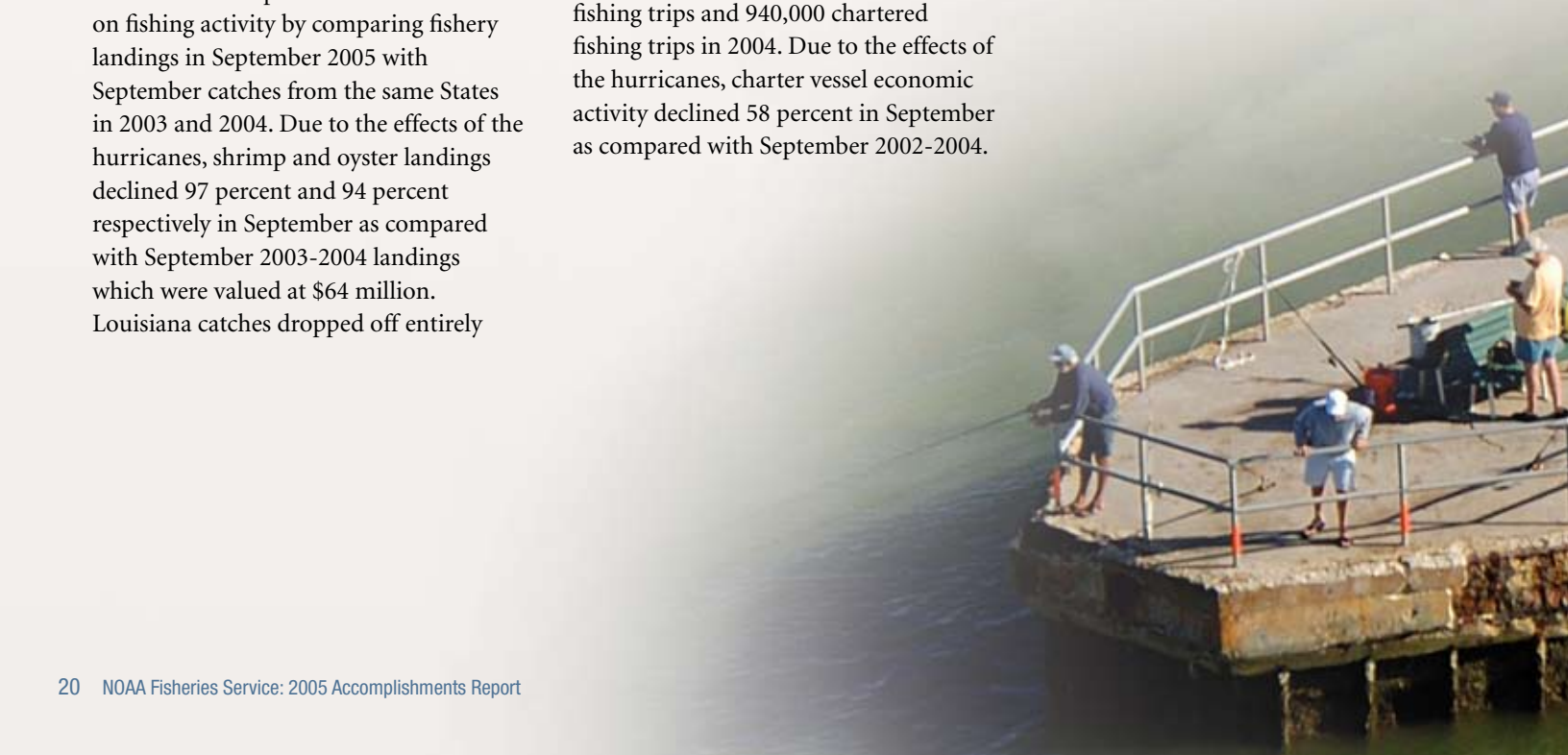
Hurricanes Katrina and Rita impacted recreational fishing from the Florida panhandle through Southeast Texas, with additional impacts being felt in southern Florida, particularly the Keys.

for these species. While reef fish catches declined by 44 percent regionwide, catches of other finfish species were essentially zero in September 2005. These reductions in commercial catches have persisted in most affected areas past September.

Recreational Fisheries Impacts: Hurricanes Katrina and Rita impacted recreational fishing from the Florida panhandle through Southeast Texas, with additional impacts being felt in southern Florida, particularly the Keys. The region's recreational fishing industry is valued at over $6.3 billion annually, with 26 million private recreational fishing trips and 940,000 chartered fishing trips in 2004. Due to the effects of the hurricanes, charter vessel economic activity declined 58 percent in September as compared with September 2002-2004.

Effects on Fishery Infrastructure — The U.S. Coast Guard estimates the number of fishing vessels sunk or driven ashore to be between 3,500 and 5,000, including nearly 2,400 commercial fishing vessels and 1,200 recreational boats. In addition, shore-side infrastructure was devastated in many areas of Mississippi, eastern Louisiana, and Alabama. For example, Bayou la Batre typically produced about 75 percent of all Alabama seafood landings, with shrimp alone contributing about $350 million a year to the State economy. As of October 8, 2005, fishing boats have not been able to leave the port. Most seafood processing plants have closed.

Biloxi is the principal Mississippi fishing port. In 2003, the market value of commercial fisheries landings in Gulfport-Biloxi was $26.8 million, ranking it 22nd of all commercial ports in the Nation. Only 60 percent of each of the four operational commercial docks is usable and only one of the two recreational docks was operational as of



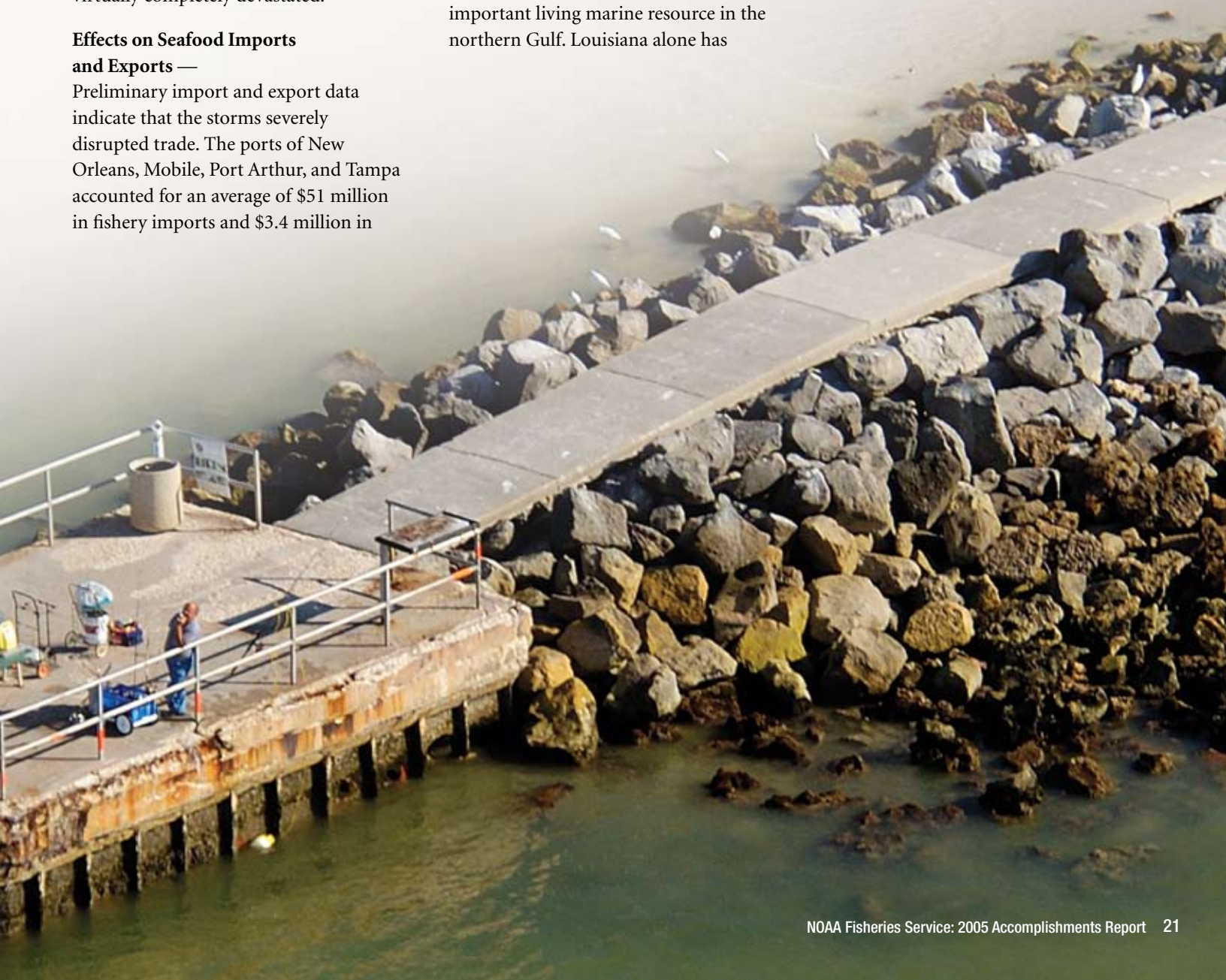
"In 2005, we witnessed unprecedented natural disasters. Scientists throughout NOAA Fisheries Service collaborated to provide a comprehensive assessment of the disasters' environmental impacts. These assessments provide key information necessary to help make our ecosystems and coastal communities more resilient to future disasters." — Steve Murawski, Director, Scientific Programs & Chief Science Advisor

mid-November 2005. None of Biloxi's marine haul-out facilities, boatyards, or builders were operating. In addition, all four of Biloxi's fishing gear, electronics, welding, and smaller repair shops were closed, if not destroyed.

The situation is similar in parts of Louisiana, although surveys there are not yet complete. The fishing infrastructure of the ports of Empire, Plaquemines, and other ports south of New Orleans were virtually completely devastated.

Effects on Seafood Imports and Exports —
Preliminary import and export data indicate that the storms severely disrupted trade. The ports of New Orleans, Mobile, Port Arthur, and Tampa accounted for an average of $51 million in fishery imports and $3.4 million in exports during September 2000-2004. In September 2005, imports declined 52 percent and exports 10 percent as compared with earlier years. This is due on the import side to the lack of infrastructure, and on the export side to the loss of fishing capacity and infrastructure.

Effects on Coastal Marshes, Wetlands, and Habitats —
Coastal wetland habitats provide critical breeding grounds to virtually every important living marine resource in the northern Gulf. Louisiana alone has 40 percent of the remaining coastal marshes in the continental United States. The barrier islands provide protection for the wetlands, and cities and towns adjacent to them. Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused tremendous damage to both wetlands and offshore-barrier islands. Total wetlands loss has been conservatively estimated to be over 100 square miles in eastern Louisiana alone due to these storms, a four-fold increase as compared to annual average wetlands loss estimates.



Enforcement Program

The NOAA Enforcement Program enforces the laws that protect and conserve our Nation's living marine resources and their natural habitat. NOAA Fisheries Service special agents and enforcement officers enforce more than 37 statutes specific to the work NOAA does, as well as numerous treaties related to marine resources. Through its six divisional offices and 59 field offices across the United States and overseas, the NOAA Enforcement Program serves all NOAA programs by conducting investigations and patrols; monitoring fishing activities; cooperating with State, local, tribal, Federal, and international partners to protect marine resources; and enforcing other Federal statutes as required. A part of this activity is education and community involvement to ensure an understanding of the value of compliance.

A major Alaskan seafood company and two associated seafood-processing companies were assessed a $3.44 million penalty for violating the American Fisheries Act for exceeding the company's crab-processing cap.

Northeast Enforcement Division

Illegal Fishing Off New Jersey Nets Penalty

A New Jersey-based seafood company and three scallop vessel owners and operators were assessed civil penalties of more than $935,000. The penalties followed a six-month investigation into illegal fishing practices which revealed numerous violations including: exceeding Atlantic Sea Scallops general category landing limits and submitting false information and reports, making false oral statements, and interfering with a Federal investigation.

New Jersey Shark Finning Fisherman Nabbed

A New Jersey fish company was charged with 323 counts of unlawfully purchasing Atlantic shark and shark fins during a six-year period. During the execution of a search warrant, NOAA Enforcement agents discovered 232 lbs. of dried fins from 12 prohibited species. The value of the prohibited species was $12,760 and resulted in an additional seven counts.

Southeast Enforcement Division

Taking a Bite Out of Illegal Toothfish

A Spanish national and a Uruguayan corporation were indicted by a Federal Grand Jury in Miami, FL, for importing and conspiring to sell approximately 53,000 pounds of illegally possessed toothfish, commonly called Chilean Sea Bass. NOAA Enforcement agents were successful in bringing to court this first criminal case in the U.S. to protect the declining Antarctic species. The defendants also were charged with false labeling and obstructing justice. The individual faces penalties of up to 35 years incarceration, and fines of $250,000 for each charge. The corporation faces fines of $500,000 per charge.

"Ghost Net" Catches More Than Owner Bargained For

A Florida shark fisherman pleaded guilty to a criminal misdemeanor for leaving a portion of a shark gillnet adrift without marker buoys and failing to notify authorities. NOAA Enforcement agents, working with officers from Florida's Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, collected the net which contained numerous shark carcasses and one loggerhead sea turtle. The fisherman faces up to one year in prison and a fine of up to $100,000.

Alaska Enforcement Division

Alaskan Seafood Company Must Pay Fines Totaling Millions

A major Alaskan seafood company and two associated seafood-processing companies were assessed a $3.44 million penalty for violating the American Fisheries Act for exceeding the company's crab-processing cap. NOAA

Enforcement's year-long investigation determined that the companies violated the crab cap limit by claiming to be two separate companies.

Commercial Fishing Company Pays Big Price For Elaborate Halibut Scheme
An Alaskan seafood company and the owner of a fishing trawler were sentenced in Federal court for violating the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act by intentionally under-reporting the amount of "bycatch" halibut brought aboard the trawler during the 1999 and 2000 groundfish seasons in the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska. The under-reporting of halibut involved an elaborate scheme to hide halibut from the onboard observers and providing false reports to NOAA Fisheries Service.

This resulted in an extended season for that entire fishery. According to the terms of the plea agreement the company received the maximum fine of $300,000; restitution in the amount of $200,000; a 14-day suspension of fishing privileges during the Jan. 2005 groundfish season; 18 months of probation; and a requirement that the company hire an expert to examine and correct policies which may have led to the criminal conduct.

Northwest Enforcement Division

Joint Investigation Pinches Illegal Blue King Crab Operation
Special agents from the NOAA Enforcement Northwest Division coordinated with Canadian Department of Fisheries & Oceans, Russian authorities, and Immigration & Customs Enforcement on an investigation of a fishing vessel that illegally harvested and transshipped Russian blue king crab in

Russian waters and then attempted to deliver the crab product to the United States through Canada. The product, valued at approximately $1,500,000, was seized when it entered the U.S.

Russian Blue King Crab Poacher Gets Seven Years
A Russian businessman, charged with poaching over 2,000 tons of blue king crab in Russia's EEZ and exporting it to the United States and Japan, was sentenced to seven years in a Russian prison. The multi-year joint international investigation by NOAA Enforcement and the Russian Federal Border Service uncovered the illegal practices.

Southwest Enforcement Division

Shark Fin Seizure Results in Forfeiture
A U.S. District Court judge in San Diego ordered the forfeiture of $618,956 which represented the fair market value of 64,695 pounds of shark fins, for a violation of the Shark Fin Prohibition Act. The fins were seized from a fishing vessel in 2002.

ESA-Listed Steelhead Deaths Lead to Large Civil Penalty
A $500,000 Notice of Violation and Assessment was issued to a contractor and the county's public works department for the unlawful discharge of liquid concrete into Carbonera Creek. While reinforcing the hillside adjacent to Hwy 17, an unusually large volume of concrete was injected into anchor holes. The concrete was discovered entering Carbonera Creek, California some 1,000 feet below the work site which contains steelhead, listed as threatened under the ESA. As a result 187 steelhead were killed.

Pacific Islands Enforcement Division

Hawaiian Whale Watch Boat Hit With Fine Following Whale Strike
A $10,000 Notice of Violation and Assessment was issued for a Level A Harassment "take" under the Marine Mammal Protection Act to a whale watch vessel owner and operator for a 2003 incident involving a strike of a humpback whale. The whale strike resulted in the death of a child when he was thrown to the deck following the strike.

Vessel Monitoring System

In 2005, the Vessel Monitoring System experienced an increase of more than 840 vessels. The Vessel Monitoring System currently monitors approximately 2,600 commercial fishing vessels participating in 10 Federally regulated fisheries. The Vessel Monitoring System continues to provide continuous monitoring of open and closed seasons, closed areas, and international boundaries.

NOAA Enforcement Partnerships

NOAA Enforcement and the U.S. Coast Guard have a long history of working together. In 2005, that partnership resulted in: the seizure of hundreds of undersized groupers and illegal shark fins from fishing vessels in the Gulf of Mexico; stopping a New England scallop fisherman from fishing illegally in a closed area; the seizure of more than 6,500 lbs of illicit catch; and the conduct of high seas driftnet over-flights in the North Pacific Ocean.

In 2005, more than $14 million was dispersed to NOAA Enforcement State and U.S. territorial partners in exchange for more than 87,000 hours of enforcement activities. Through its Cooperative Enforcement Agreements and Joint Enforcement Agreements, NOAA Enforcement conveys funding to its 25 State and U.S. territorial partners to enforce Federal statutes and regulations. Participants span the globe from the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands in the Western Pacific to the U.S. Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. In 2005, the State of Delaware joined the program. Marine conservation enforcement activities provided through these programs are critical to the protection of our Nation's living marine resources.

NOAA Enforcement supports homeland security activities through participation on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Joint Terrorism Task Forces, the Department of Justice's Anti-Terrorism Task Forces and Advisory Councils, as well as the Department of Homeland Security's Maritime Domain Awareness Initiative. While playing major roles in both the NOAA and NOAA Fisheries Service Continuity of Operations Plans and the President's National Response Plan, this year NOAA Enforcement participated in national preparedness exercises TOPOFF3 (April) and PINNACLE (June). NOAA Enforcement also responds to both natural and man-made disasters through NOAA's Incident Command Center.

"Partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations are vital to the Office for Law Enforcement. With the increase in Homeland Security and cross-agency collaboration our expertise is also applied to various task forces and security activities such as border operations, checkpoints, and dock patrols." — Dale J. Jones, Director of Enforcement

Hurricane Katrina Support

Shortly after Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast, NOAA Enforcement deployed seven special agents to the region in support of a massive humanitarian mission. They searched for missing Department of Commerce employees, supported work at the National Weather Service (NWS) site in Slidell, LA, and provided additional law enforcement capabilities in New Orleans, LA, Hattiesburg, MS, and Biloxi, MS. They were sent into the areas that were hit hardest. These agents provided first aid, distributed water, and escorted NWS technicians to critical weather infrastructure locations.

NOAA Enforcement provided additional funding to the five Gulf States through the Joint Enforcement Agreement Program to support recovery efforts. They also loaned one of its patrol vessels to the Florida Fish & Wildlife Conservation Commission, a state wildlife enforcement partner, to utilize in their support of emergency operations in Mississippi.

International Activities

NOAA Fisheries Service conducts a variety of international activities by working with governmental, nongovernmental, and international organization partners throughout the world to conserve, manage, and protect living marine resources and their habitats. To carry out these activities more efficiently, the Office of International Affairs was created in 2005. Office staff participate in the negotiation and implementation of numerous international arrangements, including conservation, management, protection, enforcement, and trade agreements. In addition, the Office conducts outreach activities concerning marine resource issues and helps build the capacity of international partners to address those issues.

The Northwest Atlantic Fishing Organization has adopted the latest in a series of international agreements to ban shark finning.

Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission

The NOAA Fisheries Service co-led delegations to the new Western and Central Pacific Fisheries Commission that will oversee conservation and management of highly migratory fish species, and to the annual formal consultation for the South Pacific Tuna Treaty with certain Pacific Island countries. These activities resulted in conservation and management measures for bigeye and yellowfin tuna; measures to address bycatches of non-target fish, seabirds, and sea turtles; and an agreement to open waters around the Solomon Islands to the U.S. purse seine fishery.

The Third Global Earth Observation Summit

Secretary Gutierrez, as part of the U.S. Delegation at the Third Global Earth Observation Summit in Brussels, Belgium, reaffirmed our country's steadfast commitment to establishing the Global Earth Observation System of Systems (GEOSS). GEOSS will address the need for timely, quality, long-term global information to serve as a basis for sound decision-making for government leaders and citizens. By linking existing technology and supporting the building of new observation capacities where required, this system will provide a planning framework for systems, data, and vital information so biologists in many countries can design, implement, and operate systems in a compatible way.

"Managing resources requires scientific data, assessments, and people working together. Add to the mix international activities, and collaboration becomes paramount."
— Rebecca Lent, Director, International Affairs

International Shark Finning Ban Adopted in the Northwest Atlantic

The Northwest Atlantic Fishing Organization has adopted the latest in a series of international agreements to ban shark finning (the practice of slicing off a shark's high-value fins and discarding the low-value carcass.) Proposed by the United States and the European Union and supported by Canada, Japan, Korea, and other member nations, this prohibition will help ensure sustainability of sharks in directed and bycatch fisheries.

NOAA has been at the forefront of this issue to reduce fishing pressure on these slow-growing apex predators that serve a key function in marine ecosystems.

Food and Agriculture Organization Adopts Eco-labeling Guidelines

U.S. government officials, including NOAA Fisheries Service staff, have worked for several years to support the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Committee on Fisheries adoption of voluntary guidelines for the eco-labeling of fish products to ensure the sustainability of the world's marine fisheries. An eco-label is placed on a product to certify that it was produced in a sustainable, environmentally friendly way. These tags help consumers make informed choices about the products they are buying. The new guidelines set out general principles for eco-labeling schemes and establish minimum requirements and criteria for assessing whether an eco-label should be awarded, consistent with FAO's Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries.

International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas

Bill Hogarth, Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, was elected to serve as Commission chairman for a two-year term. The election took place at the Commission's annual meeting in Spain. Established in 1969, the Commission is responsible for collecting scientific information, assessing stock status, and establishing management programs for 30 tuna and tuna-like species that are fished upon by many nations in the Atlantic Ocean. The Commission is made up of 41 members. The United States last chaired the Commission from 1984 to 1987.

International Whaling Commission

The International Whaling Commission held its 57th annual meeting in Ulsan, Korea. The U.S. Delegation led by Bill Hogarth focused on two issues: the Revised Management Scheme and scientific research whaling. In addition, it was decided that the 2007 IWC meeting will be hosted by the U.S. in Anchorage, Alaska. The Revised Management Scheme is a proposed management framework for commercial whaling should the moratorium on whaling be lifted. Scientific whaling was also addressed at this year's meeting. Japan announced that it will begin the second phase of its Antarctic research program by doubling its take of minke whales to 850 and adding two new species: humpback and fin whales. A resolution was adopted by consensus requesting Japan to halt its scientific research whaling program. The United States remains opposed to lethal scientific whaling.

Organization and Outreach

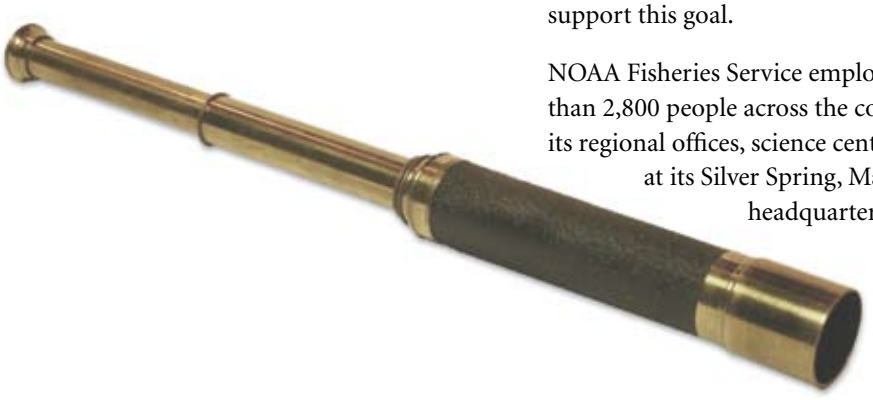
The Office of Constituent Services is the national point of contact for constituents and the general public and helps them better understand and participate in NOAA Fisheries Service's stewardship of living marine resources. The Office provides accurate and timely information, encourages participation in the public regulatory process, and seeks support for building and maintaining sustainable fisheries, recovering protected resources, and conserving and restoring marine habitats. Constituent Services coordinates outreach and education activities with the Regions and Science Centers and works closely with headquarters program offices.

NOAA Fisheries Service employs more than 2,800 people across the country in its regional offices, science centers, and at its Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters.

Clear Mission, Strong Partnerships

The NOAA Fisheries Service mission is clear—manage, conserve, and protect our Nation's living marine resources and their habitats so that the bounty of the sea remains a source for food and jobs, and a safe haven for many of nature's living wonders. The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the Marine Mammal Protection Act are the primary statutes that give NOAA Fisheries Service its mandates and authorities to carry out its work within the United States Exclusive Economic Zone. NOAA manages the use of coastal and ocean resources based on the notion that all things are connected. NOAA calls this whole system approach the "ecosystem approach to management," and NOAA Fisheries Service programs support this goal.

NOAA Fisheries Service employs more than 2,800 people across the country in its regional offices, science centers, and at its Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters.



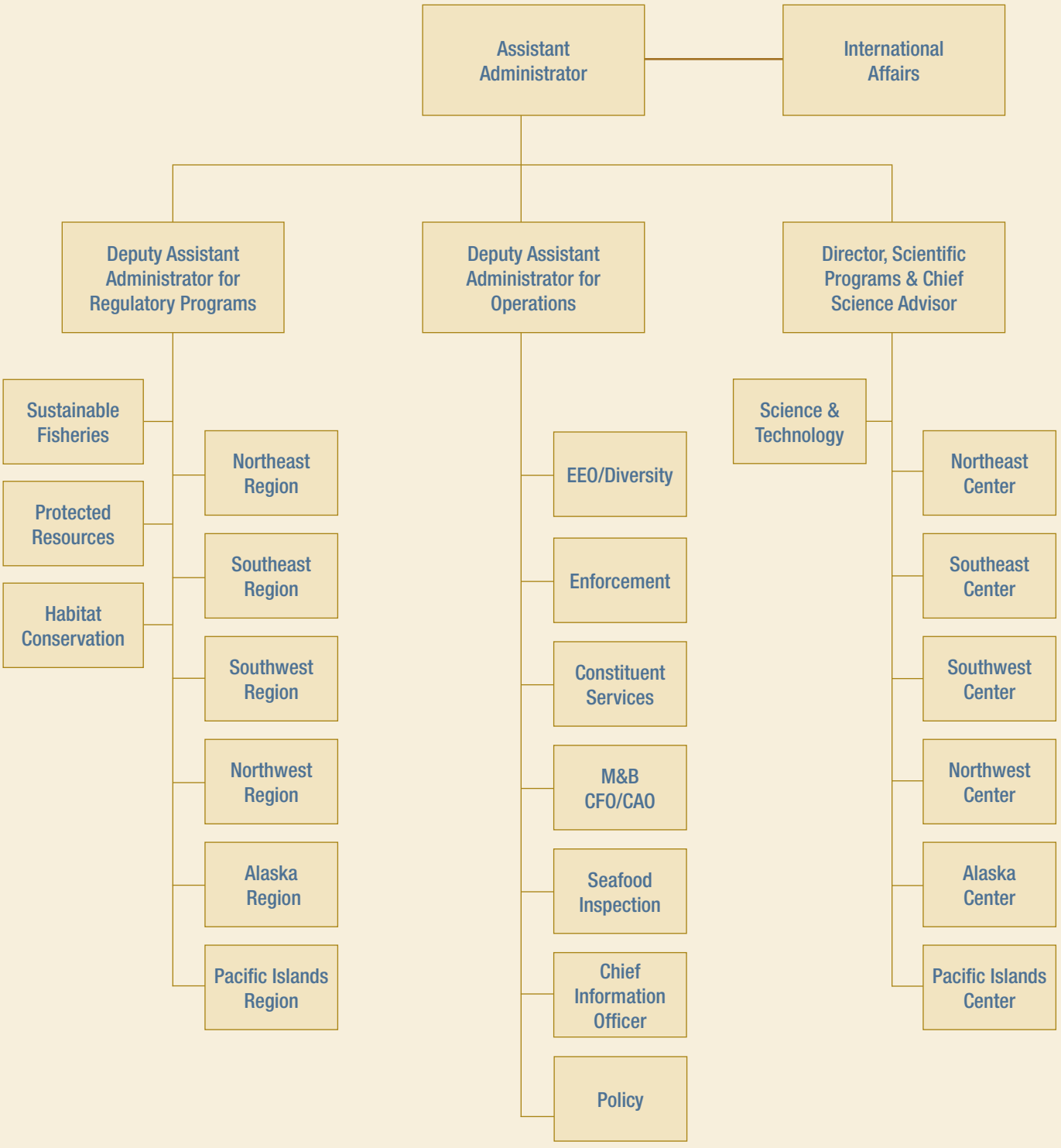
In implementing its stewardship activities, NOAA Fisheries Service works closely with State partners and other Federal agencies, local and tribal governments, industry, academia, and non-governmental organizations. Other NOAA line offices play an important role in the work we do. We work with the National Ocean Service on habitat protection and restoration and coral reef conservation. Oceanic and Atmospheric Research is our partner on ecosystem research, coral reef conservation, and understanding climate effects on ecosystems. We work with the National Environmental Satellite Data Information Service to provide Geographic Information System (GIS) maps of habitat for trust species. And NOAA National Weather Service's Weather Radio publicizes fishery closures.

NOAA Strategic Plan

NOAA Fisheries Service continually evaluates performance against outcomes and objectives. Because NOAA's and NOAA Fisheries Service's Strategic Plans support the Department of Commerce Strategic Plan Goal—to "observe, protect, and manage the Earth's resources to promote environmental stewardship"— a strong link is formed between budget and performance. The NOAA Fisheries Service 2005 Business Report is a look back at the highlights of our work in support of the NOAA Strategic Plan.

"Strategic outreach programs keep the American public regularly informed about the status of its national fisheries resources. Collaborative projects help people understand how NOAA Fisheries' work impacts their lives everyday." — Gordon Helm, Acting Director, Constituent Services

NMFS Organization Chart



NOAA Presents Environmental Hero Awards for 2005

NOAA presented 33 individuals and three organizations with its 2005 Environmental Hero Award. Recipients were honored for their tireless efforts to preserve and protect our Nation's environment and for their volunteer work to help NOAA carry out its mission. The awards were presented in conjunction with the 35th anniversary of Earth Day. Twelve of the award winners were nominated by NOAA Fisheries Service.

NOAA dignitaries joined citizens and conservation organizations on April 22nd to celebrate the completion of the Rainey Refuge Wetland Restoration Project in Intracoastal City, Louisiana.

Outreach Coordinators National Meeting

NOAA Fisheries Service outreach staff from headquarters and field offices met in Seattle, Washington as part of a week-long session of coordination, communications, and training. The meeting, hosted by the Northwest Fisheries Science Center, featured discussions with regional executives, NOAA Chief of Staff, NOAA Business Director, and NOAA Fisheries Service Deputy Director. NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Constituent Services, responsible for the outreach coordinators meeting, also provided training by specialists in event planning, messaging, layout and design, and exhibits development at the request of field and headquarters outreach staff at last year's meeting.

Winners of International "Smart Gear" Contest Announced

NOAA Fisheries Service, the World Wildlife Fund, and other partners in the International Smart Gear Competition awarded a total of $35,000 to three winners of the 2005 Smart Gear Contest. The International Smart Gear Competition brings together scientists and fishermen to solve problems collaboratively, through the creativity and ingenuity of the fishing industry and gear designers. The winners were chosen for their innovative gear designs that help prevent accidental bycatch of marine mammals, juvenile fish, and sea turtles while improving efficiencies of commercial fishing. The grand

prizewinner received $25,000 to help take his design from concept to prototype to testing and finally to manufacture. Two runners-up each received $5,000.

Public/Private Partnership Funds Evaluation of NOAA's B-WET Program

Since 2002 the NOAA Bay Watershed Education & Training (B-WET) Program has provided over $8 million in support for outdoor experiences and teacher training, reaching an estimated quarter of a million students. The investment in developing our educators is particularly important, as their ability to reach many students provides a multiplier effect. The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office, in partnership with the Keith Campbell Foundation and Chesapeake Bay Trust, has funded an evaluation of the B-WET program that will be completed next year. This evaluation will help us understand both the potential improvements in academic achievement from our programs (already documented in other studies) as well as changes in stewardship behaviors and attitudes that we anticipate as a result.

Rainey Refuge Earth Day Celebration

NOAA dignitaries joined citizens and conservation organizations on April 22nd to celebrate the completion of the Rainey Refuge Wetland Restoration Project in Intracoastal City, Louisiana. One of the largest community-based projects in the country and the second largest in Louisiana, the 6,000-acre wetland restoration project is a model for cooperation and resource sharing between the private and public sectors. As the lead Federal sponsor, NOAA's Community-based Restoration Program forged partnerships with State agencies, non-governmental organizations, and school groups to help realize the project at the National Audubon Society's first and oldest sanctuary.

The project created 17,500 linear feet of terraces and the planting of 15,400 plugs of Spartina alterniflora (marsh grass) that bind the soils and protect the new terraces from erosion. The earthen terraces help reduce shoreline erosion and create important fisheries spawning habitat which supports the Gulf region's commercial industry. Site monitoring will be conducted by Rainey staff.

Wyomissing Creek Project Dedication

After more than 80 years of blockage, a river in Reading, Pennsylvania was restored to its natural free-flowing form in 2005. With NOAA funding and technical assistance, two small dams were removed from Wyomissing Creek at the site of the Reading Public Museum. Removing the dams allows Wyomissing Creek to flow unimpeded down its 30-mile path to the Delaware Estuary, and permits migratory fish to reach their upstream spawning habitat. Along with ecological benefits, the visibility of this publicly accessible project offers education opportunities. After learning about the benefits of dam removal, many visitors and local residents volunteer to plant native vegetation along the stream bank. The NOAA barrier removal project, one of 80 such projects around the country, is an important step in restoring historic migratory fish runs and ecological health on our Nation's rivers. NOAA's Community-Based Restoration Program, American Rivers, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation joined together with the Foundation for the Reading Museum to fund the Wyomissing Creek Dam Removal project.

NOAA Heritage Week and the Preserve America Initiative

As the Nation's oldest scientific agency, NOAA has in its care a wealth of heritage resources that recall the agency's proud history, dedicated service, and legacy to the Nation. Such resources include maps, charts, photographs, books, scientific instruments, and other artifacts—some centuries old. NOAA is also the steward of large-scale historic and cultural resources, such as buildings and shipwrecks. For one week in February, the NOAA Science Center was transformed into a 1930's warehouse. Among dozens of wooden shipping crates and other props—which created feelings of adventure and discovery—more than 200 NOAA artifacts were on display for NOAA employees and the general public to enjoy and experience. NOAA Fisheries Service Office of Constituent Services played a major role in the planning, design, and management of this "museum quality" exhibition. Preserve America is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve our priceless cultural and natural heritage. Through his Preserve America Executive Order (E.O. 13287), the President has called on NOAA and other Federal agencies to inventory, preserve, and showcase federally managed historic and cultural, or heritage, resources.

Seafood Consumption Continues to Rise

Americans love seafood, and in 2004 they again set new consumption records. U.S. consumption of fish and shellfish was 16.6 pounds of edible meat per person, up 0.3 pound from the 2003 per capita consumption of 16.3 pounds. In 2002 that number was 15.6 pounds. Six years ago seafood consumption was only 14.9 pounds per capita. The U.S. supply of edible fishery products (domestic landings plus imports, round weight equivalent, minus exports) was 11.2 billion pounds in 2004—a decrease of 634.0 million pounds compared with 2003. The supply of industrial fishery products was 1.0 billion pounds in 2004—a decrease of 289.7 million pounds compared with 2003. U.S. consumers spent an estimated $61.9 billion for fishery products in 2004. The 2004 total includes $42.8 billion spent dining out on fishery products at restaurants, carry-outs, caterers, etc. These figures were published in NOAA's 2005 Report, "Fisheries of the United States."

The first of four new fisheries survey vessels (FSVs) of the same design, *OSCAR DYSON* was commissioned on May 28, and began operations in Alaskan waters.

New NOAA Fisheries Survey Vessels Reach Milestones in 2005

The first of four new fisheries survey vessels (FSVs) of the same design, *OSCAR DYSON* was commissioned on May 28, 2005, and began operations in Alaskan waters. The ship, named in honor of the late Alaskan fishing industry leader, is home ported in Kodiak, Alaska. Its primary mission is to monitor the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska ecosystems, particularly Alaskan Pollock—the Nation's largest fishery.

The second, *HENRY B.BIGELOW*, was launched by NOAA and VT Halter Marine, Inc., at Halter's shipyard in Moss Point, Miss., on July 8, 2005. The ship was named by a team of students from Winnacunnet High School in Hampton, New Hampshire, through NOAA's first educational ship naming contest. The ship's namesake was a renowned oceanographer who was also a founder of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution. Although VT Halter Marine sustained damage from Hurricane Katrina, *HENRY B. BIGELOW* was spared by the hurricane and is expected to be delivered to NOAA in mid-2006. It will be home ported in New England.

On July 7, 2005, construction began on the unnamed third vessel. A keel-laying ceremony is planned for late June 2006. The ship will be home ported in Pasacagoula, Miss. An option to build the fourth vessel was signed on December 28, 2005 and construction will begin in mid-2006. This ship will be home ported on the West Coast.

This class of 208-ft. ships was designed to meet NOAA Fisheries Service research needs, and to meet the tough standards set by the International Council for Exploration of the Seas (ICES), a European-based organization that has developed standards for optimal fisheries research. Like *OSCAR DYSON*, each ship will be outfitted with the latest equipment allowing it to study various populations of fish quietly without altering their behavior.

NOAA Celebrates National Fishing and Boating Week

NOAA joined Americans across the country to celebrate National Fishing and Boating Week (June 4-12). The week, part of Great Outdoors Month, was established to help people connect with the outdoors through fishing and boating. More than 1,200 events were held throughout the country, including the NOAA Fisheries

Service-sponsored kids' fishing events on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The day was supported by more than 40 NOAA volunteers, and additional staff from NOAA's partners including: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, National Park Service, District of Columbia, Virginia, and Maryland.

Aquarium / NOAA Agreement Will Benefit Public

NOAA Fisheries Service and The Aquarium of the Pacific entered into an agreement that establishes a formal relationship between the two organizations. Both NOAA and the Aquarium work to educate the American public about the benefits and importance

NOAA Fisheries Service 2005 Legislative Agenda

In 2005, two major legislative initiatives were the focus of the agency. The National Offshore Aquaculture Act was sent to Congress and introduced in the Senate in June (S. 1195). This legislation would establish new authority for the advancement of aquaculture in the United States, including granting the Commerce Secretary permitting authority over offshore aquaculture operations in Federal waters. NOAA Fisheries Service also developed the Administration's proposal for reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Act (MSA). Highlights of the proposal include promoting market-based management tools, improving data collection, establishing a national saltwater angler registry, emphasizing an ecosystem approach to management, broadening Council representation, and strengthening fisheries enforcement. In December 2005, the Senate Commerce Committee approved legislation (S. 2012) that reflects many of the recommendations in the Administration's MSA reauthorization proposal.

World Seafood and Health Conference Held in Washington

NOAA Fisheries Service co-sponsored the Seafood and Health '05 Conference held in Washington, D.C. Many of the world's leading scientists, academics, and dietitians traveled to Washington to discuss the relationship between seafood and health. The participants agreed that nutrients found in seafood help reduce the risk of heart attacks, and help prevent many other chronic health problems and terminal illnesses. Five scientists were honored for their research on the health benefits of Omega-3. Other sponsors included the governments of Norway, Canada, and Iceland, and technical participation by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

More than 1,200 events were held throughout the country, including the NOAA Fisheries Service-sponsored kids' fishing events on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

of a healthy environment. The agreement between NOAA and the Aquarium helps to capitalize on the shared vision and goals of improving the health of watershed-ocean ecosystems and the sustainability of the Nation's ocean resources. The agreement will draw on the financial and professional expertise of both organizations to raise the public's awareness about the impact of coastal development on the ocean environment. The U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy and the U.S. Ocean Action Plan indicate that NOAA has the leadership in protecting our oceans. The same reports also state that aquariums play a vital role in connecting the public to the oceans.

Pacific Islands Regional Office on TV

The Pacific Islands Regional Office produced a series of attractive and engaging video public service announcements that have caught the attention and praise of local television viewers. The series includes 26 two-minute segments—each dealing with a specific topic such as: seabird identification; de-hooking, tagging and tracking turtles; and marine mammal stranding hotline protocols. Also completed are two of six additional public service announcements that describe NOAA Fisheries Service activities within the Pacific Islands region. The videos were written by the Pacific Islands Regional Office staff, and were produced by a local production company. The spots air on local weekly television fishing shows.

Expanded Databases Increase Chance of Survival for Stranded Marine Mammals

When a marine mammal becomes stranded on a beach, its survival often depends on human intervention. When that's the case, time and information are critical. The NOAA Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program web-based database contains various types of stranding data that can be used to save a stranded animal. All participants in the stranding network, including NOAA Fisheries Service, regional and national coordinators, members of the Working Group on Unusual Marine Mammal Mortality Events, and other government agencies have access to the information. In 2005, work continued on an online GIS component that will provide users with the actual latitude and longitude of a stranded marine mammal. In addition, refinements continued on a second database, the National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank. The database, also accessible through the internet, is a current inventory of marine mammal specimens. The National Marine Mammal Tissue Bank is a joint project between the National Institute of Science and Technology, U.S. Geological Survey, and NOAA Fisheries Service.

MAFAC

Established in 1971, the Marine Fisheries Advisory Committee (MAFAC) advises the Secretary of Commerce on all living marine resource matters that are the responsibility of the Department of Commerce. Chaired by the Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and the Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, MAFAC serves as a national representative stakeholder group for the Administration to conduct indepth, candid discussions on matters of policy critical to the mission of NOAA Fisheries Service—helping to establish common ground and understanding for key issues.

During 2005, MAFAC provided review and feedback on the Administration's reauthorization of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act, the policy and science priorities for ecosystem-based fisheries management, cold water corals, and recreational fisheries strategic plan development. MAFAC continued its discussions and review of offshore aquaculture as an emerging issue and technology in global fisheries.

In conjunction with MAFAC's June 2005 meeting, the Administration delivered to Congress the Offshore Aquaculture Act of 2005. Concurrently, NOAA requested MAFAC add marine aquaculture as a priority issue for the long-term in order to meet objectives of the National Offshore Aquaculture Act and to help establish external stakeholder communications.

MAFAC advised on the development of a new awards program dedicated to recognizing and encouraging best stewardship practices among the users and constituencies involved with the Nation's living marine resources. Entitled the "Stewardship and Sustainability Awards," the program was launched in December 2005 and will allow for annual recognition of the contributions made to the science and management of our Nation's living marine resources. Designed as an annual event, the Stewardship and Sustainability Awards will occur in conjunction with the anniversary of the establishment of the U.S. Fisheries Commission (NOAA Fisheries Service predecessor). MAFAC will serve as the external review panel for nominations.

Information Technology

The Office of the Chief Information Officer (CIO) provides Information Technology (IT) user service and support to NOAA Fisheries Service offices worldwide. From its Silver Spring, Maryland headquarters, each of the CIO's three program teams—Applications Development, Infrastructure, and Security, Budget, and User Services—supports field and headquarters IT needs and requirements, including engineering, software development, and security.

NOAA Fisheries Service launched a website loaded with information about how to reduce ship strike collisions with endangered North Atlantic right whales.

Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Database

The NOAA Marine Mammal Health and Stranding Response Program Database website gives the public comprehensive information on marine mammal strandings. The information and data are obtained from actual stranding events and other research sources. The information provided for each stranded animal is obtained through a database of records that is updated and reviewed by the NOAA Fisheries Service Regional Coordinators.
http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/health/

The Public Consultation Tracking System

The Public Consultation Tracking System is an online query system allowing Federal Agencies to track the status of NOAA Fisheries Service consultations under the Endangered Species Act and under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act sections 305(b)(2) & 305(b)(4) Essential Fish Habitat.
http://seahorse.nmfs.noaa.gov/pcts/

Permit Shop for Atlantic Tunas

NOAA Fisheries Service deployed an on-line Permit Shop for Atlantic tunas in order to streamline the permit renewal process. The system issues over 30,000 permits per year. Prior to the online Permit Shop, the application process was long and involved for the applicant. The permitting and landings data gathered by the Permit Shop system provides NOAA Fisheries Service a wealth of data about the fisheries. The Permit Shop has reduced time to acquire a permit, reduced billing errors, and reduced customer complaints.

Surfclam & Ocean Quahog Fisheries Information

This website includes Hot News, regulations, rules, quota reports, permit holder letters, Federal Register Notices, and cooperative survey data for the Northeast Region of the U.S. There is also a section dealing with emergency closures occurring as a result of the outbreak of paralytic shellfish poisoning (also referred to as Red Tide) in mid-year 2005.
http://www.nero.noaa.gov/sfd/clams/

NOAA Fisheries Service Announces Online Guide for Protected Species Permit Applicants

NOAA Fisheries Service has launched a website to help prospective applicants determine what authorizations they may need under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Marine Mammal Protection Act (MMPA). The website gives a list of required permits/authorizations, contact information, and links to more information, including electronic forms.

"Securing data is a huge challenge. Each employee must be vigilant, not just a select group of specialists. The NOAA Fisheries Service IT team's most effective tool is collaboration."
— Larry Tyminski, Director, Information Management

This is the first phase of an online system for Authorizations and Permits for Protected Species (APPS) issued by NOAA Fisheries Service. The next phase of the system, anticipated in about a year, will allow applicants to apply online for these authorizations and permits. *http://apps.nmfs.noaa.gov*

NOAA Fisheries Service Ship Strike Reduction Website

NOAA Fisheries Service launched a website loaded with information about how to reduce ship strike collisions with endangered North Atlantic right whales. At the site, the mariner will find aerial surveys of the most recent right whale sightings, information about the prevention of ship strikes, and the mandatory regulations. *http://www.nero.noaa.gov/shipstrike/*

NOAA Fisheries Service Interagency Electronic Reporting

The Aleutian Islands Western and Eastern golden king crab fisheries, which opened August 15, 2005, serve as pilot fisheries for a new electronic fishing data reporting system. The new system is the first of its kind for the Alaska fisheries, leaving behind paper fish tickets and consolidating the reporting requirements of NOAA Fisheries Service, the State of Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the International Pacific Halibut Commission. *http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/newsreleases/elandings081505.htm*

Electronic Records and Document Management System in NOAA Fisheries Service Southeast Regional Office

Irreplaceable NOAA Fisheries Service information can now be secured and preserved, while ensuring its availability and accessibility. Documents pertaining to the issuance of permits represent the first category of information assets entered into the system. The system will serve as a tool for the general preservation and management of the region's Federal records and critical information assets.

Data, Assessment, and Review (SEDAR)

SEDAR is a cooperative Fishery Management Council process that improves the quality and reliability of fishery stock assessments in the South Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico, and US Caribbean. SEDAR is managed by the Caribbean, Gulf of Mexico, and South Atlantic Regional Fishery Management Councils along with NOAA Fisheries Service and the Atlantic and Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commissions. The public can access SEDAR information at *http://www.sefsc.noaa.gov/sedar/*.

NOAA Fisheries Service 2005 Awards

Although NOAA was formed in 1970, the agencies that came together at that time are among the oldest in the Federal Government, including the Bureau of Fisheries formed in 1871. In 2006, NOAA Fisheries Service will celebrate 135 years of service to our Nation. Throughout its history, NOAA and its forerunner agencies have valued its employees as its greatest asset. Each year, NOAA, a part of the Department of Commerce, honors these dedicated and talented individuals with a comprehensive awards program. The following are the 2005 recipients:

DISTINGUISHED CAREER AWARD

Christopher Mantzaris
Northeast Regional Office

Michael Sissenwine (Retired)
NOAA Fisheries Service Director of Scientific Programs and Chief Science Advisor

Tim Smith
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Usha Varanasi
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

GOLD

Individual Award

Kenneth Sherman
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

James Cassin, Jr.
HQ Office of Law Enforcement

Robert (Logan) Gregory
HQ Office of Law Enforcement

Jeffrey Ray
HQ Office of Law Enforcement

SILVER

Individual

Gary Stauffer
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Daniel Cohen
DOC General Counsel

Donna Darm
Northwest Regional Office

Kirsten Erickson
NOAA General Counsel

Mark Plummer
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Steven Stone
Northwest Regional Office

R. Craig Wingert
Southwest Regional Office

Group Award

Steven Davis
Alaska Regional Office

James Hale
Alaska Regional Office

Jonathan Heifetz
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Anne Hollowed
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Daniel Ito
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Patricia Livingston
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Joseph McCabe
NOAA General Counsel

Lauren Smoker
NOAA General Counsel

Group Award

Jeffrey Fujioka
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Anne Hollowed
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Daniel Ito
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Craig Rose
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Raymond Clarke
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Judson Feder
NOAA General Counsel

Michael Gonzales
HQ Office of Law Enoforcement

Charles Karnella
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Paul Ortiz
NOAA General Counsel

Gary Sakagawa
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Dean Swanson
HQ Office of Sustainable Fisheries

BRONZE

Individual

Jason Baker
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Mark Berman
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Christopher Jordan
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Mark Lowry
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Paul Niemeier
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

William Overholtz
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Michael Quach
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Gregory Schneider
HQ Constituent Services

John Ward
HQ Constituent Services

Group Award

David Arthaud
Northwest Regional Office

Lyndal Johnson
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

James Meador
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Karen Peck Miller
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Edmond Murrell
Northwest Regional Office

Melanie Rowland
NOAA General Counsel

Russell Strach
Northwest Regional Office

Group Award

Patsy Bearden
Alaska Regional Office

Tracy Buck
Alaska Regional Office

Alfred Cook
Alaska Regional Office

Ronald Felthoven
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Toni Fratzke
Alaska Regional Office

Jessica Gharrett
Alaska Regional Office

Gretchen Harrington
Alaska Regional Office

Jeffrey Hartman
Alaska Regional Office

D. Alan Kinsolving
Alaska Regional Office

Kimberly Marshall
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Glenn Merrill
Alaska Regional Office

Group Award

Lee Benaka
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Victoria Cornish Credle
Southeast Regional Office

Jonathan Cusick
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Tanya Dobrzynski
HQ Protected Resources

Michael Fogarty
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Svein Fougner (Retired)
Southwest Regional Office

James Nance
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Joseph Powers
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Joseph Terry
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Susan Bishop
Northwest Regional Office

Keith Schultz
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Group Award

Kimberly Blankenbeker
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Erika Carlsen
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

John Dunnigan
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Patricia Kraniotis
NOAA General Counsel

Mariam McCall
NOAA General Counsel

Rachel O'Malley
HQ Constituent Services

Christopher Rogers
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Gerald Scott
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

John Bortniak
HQ Management and Budget

James Cohen
HQ Management and Budget

Robert Ziobro
HQ Management and Budget

Group Award

Richard Boyer
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Donald Brown
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

David Herman
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Ronald Pearce
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Catherine Sloan
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Cynthia Binkley
Southeast Regional Office

Jeffrey Brown
Southeast Regional Office

Scot Plank
Southeast Regional Office

Ellie Roche
Southeast Regional Office

Group Award

John Burnett
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Elizabeth O'Neill
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Sarah Pregracke
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Sandra Sutherland
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Tracy Collier
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

John Collins
HQ Habitat Conservation

William Zahner
HQ Constituent Services

Group Award

Lawrence Brady
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Linda Despres
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

William Kramer
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Kevin McIntosh
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Stacy Rowe
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Patricia Donley
Southwest Regional Office

Christopher Fanning
Southwest Regional Office

William Jacobson
Southwest Regional Office

Group Award

Patricia Dornbusch
Northwest Regional Office

Elizabeth Gaar
Northwest Regional Office

Dan Guy
Northwest Regional Office

J. Paul McElhany
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Richard Turner
Northwest Regional Office

Group Award

Russell Dunn
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Gregory Fairclough
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Caroline Park
NOAA General Counsel

Richard Pearson
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

G. Chris Rilling
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Christopher Rogers
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Heather Stirratt
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Group Award

Peter Dutton
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Dale Squires
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

NOAA Fisheries Service 2005 Awards

Group Award

Mary Fabrizio
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

John Manderson
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Jeffrey Pessutti
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Beth Phelan-Hill
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Stephen Brown
HQ Science and Technology

M. Elizabeth Clarke
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

William Fox, Jr.
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Perry Gayaldo
HQ Habitat Conservation

Ronald Salz
HQ Science and Technology

Group Award

Roger Gentry
HQ Protected Resources

Brandon Southall
HQ Protected Resources

Group Award

Roderick Hobbs
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Barbara Mahoney
Alaska Regional Office

Sue Moore
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

David Rugh
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Kim Shelden
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Janice Waite
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

John Hotaling
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

James Meehan
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Daniel Twohig
Alaska Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

John Kern
HQ Habitat Conservation

Tom Moore
HQ Habitat Conservation

Group Award

Brian Brown
HQ Management and Budget

Mark Eames
NOAA General Counsel

Gary Fredricks
Northwest Regional Office

Lynee Krasnow
Northwest Regional Office

Kim Kratz
Northwest Regional Office

D. Robert Lohn
Northwest Regional Office

James Ruff
Northwest Regional Office

Christopher Toole
Northwest Regional Office

Robert Walton
Northwest Regional Office

Group Award

Timothy Beechie
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Thomas Cooney
Northwest Regional Office

Michelle McClure
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Mary Ruckelshaus
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Paul Kostovick
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Nancy McHugh
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Chris Pickett
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Victor Simon
Northwest Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Christofer Boggs
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

William Chappell
HQ Sustainable Fisheries

Judson Feder
NOAA General Counsel

Wende Goo
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Thomas Graham
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Marcia Hamilton
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Alvin Katekaru
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Donald Kobayashi
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Marilyn Luipold
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Samuel Pooley
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Shannon Cass-Calay
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Miles Croom
Southeast Regional Office

David Hanisko
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Richard Hartman
Southeast Regional Office

Joanne Lyczkowski-Shultz
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Thomas Minello
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Clarence Porch
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Rickey Ruebsamen
Southeast Regional Office

Kelly Shotts
Southeast Regional Office

Russell Swafford
Southeast Regional Office

W. Mark Thompson
Southeast Regional Office

Douglas Vaughan
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Charles Bergmann
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Peter Dutton
Southwest Fisheries Science Center

Jana (Yonat) Swimmer
Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Joseph Mello
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

David Potter
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Sara Quinn
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Gina Shield
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Amy Van Atten
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Mary Woodruff
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Patricia Yoos
Northeast Fisheries Science Center

Group Award

Laura Engleby
Southeast Regional Office

Dana Hartley
Northeast Regional Office

Blair Mase
Southeast Fisheries Science Center

Teresa Rowles
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Trevor Spradlin
Pacific Islands Regional Office

Barbara Zoodsma
Southeast Regional Office

ORGANIZATIONAL AWARDS

Northeast Regional Statistics Office-and-Port Agents

Northeast Regional Office – Sustainable Fisheries Division

Northeast Fisheries Science Center – Data Management Systems

Northwest Fisheries Science Center – Fish Ecology Division

NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR

Patty Andriese - SWRO
Clydina Bailey - AKRO
Kristie Balovich - AKRO
Katie Barnas - NWFSC
Scott Bloom - PIRO
Bethany Brosnan – HQs
Howard Brown - SWRO
Tracy Buck - AKRO
Ann Byar - NWFSC
Dan Caless - NERO
Dale Chastagner - SWFSC
Jayson Chatman - SEFSC
Martin Colby - NERO
Tracy Collier - NWFSC
Tony Conigliari - NERO
Dawn Davis - NEFSC
Robert Dollar - PIFSC
Peter Dygert - NWRO
Linda Erikson - NWRO
Christy Fellas - NWRO
Eric Forney - PIRO
Ben Genegabus - SWFSC
Libby Gilbert-Horvath - SWFSC
Mary Goode - AKRO
William Heard - AKFSC
Eugene Heyerdahl - NEFSC
Scott Hill - SWRO
Cheryl Hinkel - SEFSC
Sonja Kromann - AFSC
Chris Luecken - NWFSC
Bruce MacFarlane – SWFSC
Ellen McQueen - AKFSC
Blair Mase-Guthrie - SEFSC
Brian Mason - AKFSC
Nancy Munn - NWRO
Ben Muse - AKRO
Barbara Newell - NEFSC
Bonnie Oshiro – PIFSC
Don Paskowski - NERO
Mark Peterson - NWFSC
Beth Phelan - NEFSC
Dave Potter - NEFSC
Russell Price - PIFSC
Edward Risley - AKFSC
Laura Robinson - PIRO
Patricia Rosel - SEFSC
Teri Rowles - HQs
Gwen Sanderlin - SERO
Andrew Strelcheck - SERO
Sylvia Stribling - HQs
Buck Sutter - SERO
Sandra Tanaka - PIRO
Gloria Thompson – HQs
Lucille Tsukano - PIFSC
Alison Verry - NERO
James Waters - SEFSC
Robin Wiebler - SERO
Cara Wilson - SWFSC
Gordon Yamasaki - PIRO
Paula Yates - HQs
Jerry Wetherall - PIFSC

Distinguished Career Award

Pat Gerrior - NERO
Rich Macintosh - AKFSC

U.S. Secretary of Commerce
Carlos M. Gutierrez

Under Secretary of Commerce for Oceans and Atmosphere and Administrator, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Conrad C. Lautenbacher, Jr.
Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret.)

Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
NOAA Fisheries Service
William T. Hogarth, Ph.D.

www.nmfs.noaa.gov

Constituent Services (301) 713-2379

Public Affairs (301) 713-2370

National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East West Highway
SSMC 3, F/CS, Room 9511
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910